

PLUCK AND LUCK

STORIES OF ADVENTURE.

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NEW YORK, JUNE 9, 1909.

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THE BOYS OF BLACK BAY; OR, THE YOUNG LUMBER KING OF THE NORTH WOODS. *By BERTON BERTREW.*



Dick and Andy drove their poles hard into the timber, and braced themselves for the final shock. A moment more of breathless suspense, and then it came. The stern of the raft was seen to rise high into the air.



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THE BOYS OF BLACK BAY

OR,

The Young Lumber King of the North Woods

By **Berton Bertrew.**

CHAPTER I.

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE BOOM.

"There! There comes another tree, Mr. Van Tassell!" shouted Andy. "Look out, Dick. We must fend her off! By gracious, but it's a big one this time!"

Dick Wright ran over the logs and joined Andy Benson.

With their long poles shod with sharp iron prods, the boys drove back the huge pine which came sweeping down the Oklawaha.

Turned away from the mill race, the tree went crashing over the falls to be swept off into Black Bay, from whence it might float out into Lake Superior, or sink to the bottom; whichever way it went was a matter of indifference to the two boys so long as it had been driven away from Mr. Van Tassell's mill.

Just then Mr. Van Tassell came out of the office of the mill, and ascending the steps walked out upon the log boom.

He looked pale and worn. As he stepped from log to log they sank beneath him, often taking the old man knee deep in the water, a matter of no consequence, since he wore big lumberman's boots which came up to his thighs.

"Keep your eyes open, boys," he called. "There's another coming; you can see it away up by the big bend."

"We all see it, sir," answered Dick. "You'd better go home and go to bed; you're all tired out."

"No," replied Mr. Van Tassell, springing upon the big tree trunk on which the boys were standing. "No, Dick, I shall not go home until sunrise and all danger is over."

"You can't be sure. The drop may be only temporary. I've seen the water fall an inch or so and then suddenly rise again. Not that it makes much difference. I half wish the mill might be swept away and me with it—upon my word I do."

"Don't be downhearted, sir," said Dick. "Things have certainly gone against you for the last few months, but better times are coming. Anyhow, Andy and I will stand by you to the last."

Tears came to Mr. Van Tassell's eyes.

"Dick Wright," he said, "you're a Christian and the best boy in Black Bay. It's only a pity you're an orphan and have no parents to be proud of such a son. If it would be of any use to you I'd adopt you, but any boy would fare better alone than to be tied to an old, worn-out failure like me."

Dick laughed.

"There you go again," he said. "I tell you, Mr. Van Tassell,

there's no use in despairing. Things will brighten up just as surely as the freshet will go down. I heard the men talking down at the post office last night, and from what was said I don't think the strike will last much longer. All hands are sick of it. The loss to the town has been terrible; the truth is the men are about starved out, and are ready to go back to work on your terms."

"I doubt if they ever come back," was the reply. "The long strike has ruined me. I've lost all chance of disposing of last winter's cut. My notes have gone to protest in Chicago and St. Paul, and the mortgage on the mill has been foreclosed, and the whole plant, including the timber lands, is to be sold out at auction next Friday week. That's why I say that I shouldn't care if the mill was to be swept away and me with it. The fact is, Dick, I'm very blue to-night. Somehow I feel as though this was the end. The strike of my men was the last straw. I don't think they will ever work for me again, but to you two boys—especially to you, Dick—I shall ever be grateful for the noble way in which you have stood by me in my trouble. Just think of it! Not a man would budge when I rushed down to Black Bay last evening and begged them to come up here on the boom and help me save the mill. But you and Andy were ready—yes, you were ready; and when those scoundrels stoned you and called you names because you were willing to help the old boss—look out, boys! Here it comes! Strike it under that big branch! Dig your pole in there. That's the talk! Now she goes! Saved again!"

And as the big hemlock swept over the falls, the sun rose above the tree tops, its light streaming across the rushing waters of the Oklawaha.

Dick Wright heaved a sigh of relief. It had been a terrible night there on the log boom.

During the first two hours Dick fully expected to see the mill go over the falls and the boom with it, but the worst was certainly over now, and there really seemed no occasion for Mr. Van Tassell's dismal monologue.

Dick wished devoutly that the old man would go home and leave him alone with Andy, but instead of that he began again.

"Dick," he said, "you're a smart boy; why don't you take this thing up where I lay it down? I'm old and played out, but you are young and full of pluck and energy. Even if you are only nineteen, you understand the lumber business perfectly. When I made you foreman here at the mill a year ago I made

no mistake, for I never had a better one. I tell you, boy, it's the chance of a lifetime; business is going to be better; lumber is going to boom. Dick, you want to buy the mill."

"How can I buy the mill, sir?" replied Dick, his frank, manly face flushing. "I'm only a poor boy working for wages. I haven't a cent to my name."

"You may be only a poor boy without a cent to your name, but you've got an uncle with more than a million dollars to his name," Mr. Van Tassell drawled out in his slow, dismal fashion. "Take my advice, Dick, and go down to St. Paul and ask Mr. Goldwin to help you. He's in the lumber business himself. He knows all about it. He——"

"No, no! I can't do it!" broke in Dick. "I never saw my uncle in all my life. He never spoke to my mother from the day she married just because my father was a poor man. I wouldn't be beholden to him under any circumstances. I'd rather remain what I am than ask him for one cent."

"There you're dead wrong!"

"I don't think so."

"Nonsense! It's all false pride! Something tells me, Dick, that my days are numbered, and——"

"Look at that boat!" cried Andy, suddenly. "By ginger, that fellow must be crazy to try to cross the river at a time like this!"

"Crazy! He's a perfect idiot!" exclaimed Dick. "He'll have himself and that girl over the falls as sure as fate!"

"That's just what he will do," said Mr. Van Tassell. "Run up to the end of the boom, boys, and call to him to pull in by the logs. He can never make the lower landing! Quick!"

It was, indeed, a very serious case.

No one at all acquainted with the Oklawaha at a time of freshet would have dared to undertake such a crazy proceeding.

Dick took in the whole situation at a glance.

A stylishly-dressed young man and a very pretty girl occupied the boat. They evidently belonged to a party of summer boarders, who had lingered at the Black Bay Hotel far into September.

Probably the three days' storm now just over had made them anxious to quit the woods, and it was their intention to catch the steamer Red Jacket, booked to leave for Duluth at half-past six-o'clock.

"That fellow don't know any more about handling a boat than a cat!" cried Andy. "If he gets caught in the eddy he's a goner, sure!"

"Hey! Hello, there!" shouted Dick. "You want to pull in here. You can't make the landing! It's no use to try!"

The young man—he was a dudish-looking fellow with shirt collar up under his ears and his hair parted in the middle—looked over at Dick with a scowl on his face.

"Say, wouldn't it be a good scheme for you to mind your own business?" he called. "I'm running this boat. I know what I'm about."

"You'll be over the falls in just about five minutes if you keep on the way you're going!" cried Dick. "Mebbe it would do you good, but I don't want to see the lady lose her life."

The girl gave an anxious start at this.

"Oh, do turn in, Mr. Darlington!" she cried.

"I won't do it!" snapped the dude, impolitely. "You needn't have a particle of fear, Miss Ella. I know what I'm about."

"You're a fool! You're going to your death!" shouted Mr. Van Tassell from his position further down the boom.

"Pull in—pull in to the logs, or I'll do it for you!" cried the girl, and she attempted to rise in the boat.

Her imprudent action tipped the boat dangerously.

The girl screamed and dropped back into her seat, throwing her weight on the wrong side, which sent the boat over still further. Fortunately it was a flat-bottomed affair, and did not upset, but somehow young Darlington managed to let go one

of his oars, and at the same time pulled violently on the other, which sent the bow of the boat dangerously near the eddy.

"Thunder!" cried Dick, seeing their great peril.

Without an instant's hesitation, he plunged into the water, stopping only to throw aside his hat.

A few bold strokes through the rushing water brought him to the boat just as it was being caught by the eddy.

He seized the bow-ring not an instant too soon.

Young Darlington seemed to have lost his head entirely—he persisted in working his oar on the wrong side, which only made matters worse.

"Ship your oar!" shouted Dick. "Throw out your bow-line! Sit perfectly still, both of you! There! That's better! Now, leave the rest to me!"

"Good boy, Dick!" cried Andy. "You've got 'em."

But really it was nothing for Dick, who was the most expert swimmer in Black Bay.

He just turned over on his back, and holding the line, kicked straight out, bringing the boat up to the log boom in no time.

"Here, Andy, make fast!" he cried, throwing out the line. "Now, then, miss, if you're careful, you can walk over these logs to the steps you see there by the mill. You'll probably get your feet wet, but you won't lose your life."

"Thank you a thousand times," said the girl, extending her hand to Dick, who had scrambled out upon the boom. "You have saved my life, and——"

"Nonsense! There wasn't any danger at all," broke in young Darlington. "Still, now that we are here we may as well cross the logs."

"I should say so," replied the girl, dryly. Then, turning to Dick, she added:

"I thank you again. If you will tell me your name——"

"Don't mention it," said Dick, raising his hat gallantly. "It was really nothing; I've been in the water half a dozen times to-night."

"No; it ain't worth mentioning," broke in the dude. "Here, young man—take this for your trouble. The boat belongs up at the Black Bay House; you can let them know it's here."

He pulled out a silver dollar and held it toward Dick, who drew back with reddening face.

"I don't do these things for money," he said proudly, and he turned his back squarely on the rude fellow and started to walk down the boom.

"For shame!" cried the girl. "Mr. Darlington, I didn't think you could be so rude."

"Why, he's nothing but a common logger," was the last Dick heard.

"Pig," said Andy, indignantly. "If it hadn't been for the girl it would have been a good job if the boat would have gone over the falls. I'd like to punch that beggar just once."

"Let him go to thunder with his money!" flushed Dick. "He is just a little St. Paul puppy, and— Andy, look! Look at Mr. Van Tassell! What in the world is the matter? Run, run! He's got one of his fits!"

Away down at the other end of the boom stood the old mill owner, swaying from side to side.

His head had fallen upon his breast, his hands were working convulsively, his knees seemed to be doubling under him.

Dick knew these symptoms only too well, having seen Mr. Van Tassell so many times before in them.

He knew also that this was only the beginning, and that in another moment Mr. Van Tassell would surely fall. Running over the unsteady logs was no easy matter.

The boys leaped from log to log, at every other step plunging into water up to their knees, rising again as the log rose and dashing on.

"He'll never hold up till we get there!" gasped Andy. "This is terrible! If he goes into the water he's a goner, sure!"

"Hurry! Hurry!" cried Dick. "We're almost there! Too late! There he goes!"

Suddenly the unfortunate man pitched forward off the boom.

Dick and Andy heard the girl's scream ring out behind them as Mr. Van Tassell fell, face downward, into the water.

"Save him!" cried Andy. "If you can't do it, Dick Wright, no one can!"

Then for the second time Dick dove into the Oklawaha.

But he might just as well have remained on the boom, for the unfortunate mill-owner never rose to the surface.

Doubtless his body was swept under the boom, and later went over the falls and out into Lake Superior.

Dick dove twenty times and more in the fruitless effort to find him,

All Black Bay was at the boom a little later, and for hours the search went on.

But it was all to no purpose.

Mr. Van Tassell's gloomy forebodings had turned out only too true.

In due time the river dropped into its old channel, and the logs rested on the muddy bottom, but the unfortunate mill owner was never seen again.

CHAPTER II.

WHAT HAPPENED TO DICK IN DULUTH.

There was the greatest excitement in Black Bay ever known in the history of the little lumber town, when it came to be generally noised about that Mr. Van Tassell's miserable ending was to be followed by the sale of the big saw mill and the extensive tract of timber land up in the Great North Woods which the dead mill owner had controlled.

Ruin—black ruin stared the wretched lumbermen and mill hands in the face.

Yet they had no one but themselves to blame, for if they had not submitted to the dictation of labor agitators who had never even shown themselves in Black Bay, Mr. Van Tassell would unquestionably have sold his winter's cut, met his notes, and very likely have been alive and flourishing as he had flourished in days gone by, when he was known as the Lumber King of Black Bay.

Everybody was willing to go to work now, but there was no work to do, and all sorts of rumors went flying around.

Some said the mill was to be opened up by Mr. Caleb Goldwin, the millionaire lumberman of St. Paul.

Others declared a syndicate was going to buy it for the purpose of pulling it down, and so reducing the output of lumber in the northwest.

Still another story had it that Lazarus Wolfstein & Co., the big Jew lumber firm of Chicago, would certainly buy it, and as the Wolfsteins were noted for miserly dealing and low wages, this did not please the strikers at all.

One evening, a few days following the accident on the boom, just as Andy Benson was going to bed, he heard a pebble come against his window.

Andy pulled on his trousers again and threw up the sash.

"That you, Dick?" he called out, seeing a dark figure standing on the steps.

"Hello, Andy! May I come up?"

"Of course! I'll come down and open the door. Mother has gone over to Aunt Kate's for the night, and I'm all alone in the house."

"You ain't in bed, old fellow?"

"How can I be in bed when I'm here at the window? But if I was it wouldn't make any difference. I'd be only too glad to get up and let you in, Dick."

When Dick came upstairs he threw himself in the only chair, exclaiming:

"Andy Benson, I've made up my mind to try it! I'm going to pocket my pride and go to St. Paul. Mr. Van Tassell's last

advice has been ringing in my ears ever since. I'm going to try it even if I fail."

"Good for you!" cried Andy. "Dick, you won't fail!"

"I'm not so sure!"

"I am, then! Listen to what I tell you! You'll make a go of it; you'll succeed!"

"Thank you, Andy. You'll stand by me and work with me, of course?"

"Won't I? Well, I reckon, you can't drive me away with a club if Dick Wright is going to be the boss of Black Bay Mill."

"You'll go down to St. Paul with me?"

"Sure I will, Dick. When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning; in the City of Pearl River."

"Then you'd better bunk with me to-night, and we'll make an early start."

"Just what I came for, Andy. You're close to the wharf, and if I miss the boat that settles it, for before the Red Jacket goes down the lake the mill will have been sold."

So the boys slept together that night, and the next morning started on the City of Pearl River for Duluth, Dick paying expenses, for he was one of the saving kind, and always had money on hand.

The steamer was late getting into Duluth next day, and as a consequence the boys missed the train for St. Paul.

"Do you know," said Dick, as they walked back down the wharf after making this disagreeable discovery, "that I am more than half glad of it, Andy. I dread meeting my uncle, so that I have been half a mind to turn back a dozen times."

"For which you'd be a big fool," replied Andy, decidedly. "Remember, Dick, Mr. Van Tassell was a long-headed man; you were his favorite, and you are acting on his dying advice."

"I know, Andy, and it is that which gives me courage; still I can't bear——"

"You can't bear to fail, Dick. Your uncle can only say no."

"The chances are he'll fire me out of his office."

"The chances are he'll do nothing of the sort. There's the Red Jacket, Dick! Wonder if she'll be back in time for us to go up the lake in her on our return?"

"Of course we take her, but I expect to have to wait a day."

"Will there be time?"

"Oh, yes; the auction won't be till Friday. What's the matter there?"

The steamer Red Jacket lay out in the stream between the wharf and Hunt & Co.'s Elevator D.

Between the steamer and the wharf lay an ancient-looking barge from which men were hoisting boxes by the aid of a block and fall operated by a horse on the wharf.

"Look out there, you clumsy idiot!" a big man who stood on the deck of the barge had suddenly shouted down the hatchway. "Don't you sling another box loose like that! Do you want to blow us all to blazes?"

"What is that stuff, do you suppose?" asked Andy.

"Wouldn't wonder a bit if it was dynamite; that's the kind of boxes it comes in," replied Dick.

"Thunder! We'd better get out of the way then."

"Oh, pshaw! There's no danger! That fellow is only trying to make them careful."

But there was danger. The man in the hold was drunk, and the very next box he put in the sling slipped just as it reached the deck.

The explosion which followed was something the two Black Bay boys were destined to remember for a lifetime.

It blew the barge to atoms, killing every man on board.

It broke half the windows for blocks around.

The floating wreckage of the barge, all ablaze, went against the steamer Red Jacket, and set her on fire.

Fire was also communicated in some way to a big warehouse on the wharf, and in a moment that was blazing, too.

Now the exciting scene which followed it is no part of our purpose to describe.

Dick and Andy, half stunned by the shock, ran down to the end of the wharf to have a look at the burning steamer, whose bows were blazing away in great shape.

The crew had hastily lowered the boats and were making for the wharf, for the flames were spreading with fearful rapidity.

"Thunder! Are they going to let her burn where she is?" cried Andy. "They'll have the elevator afire next! What's the matter with them? Are they just a lot of cowards! Why don't they pull her out into the lake?"

"Look! Look!" exclaimed Dick. "See that girl?"

"See her! Yes! Why in time don't they go back and help her?"

"Why! Because they're afraid! Andy, we've got to take a hand in here!"

"Blamed if we haven't! But how——"

"Jump!"

There was a small boat lying right below them, tied to one of the piles of the wharf.

Dick was first to catch sight of it, and he jumped down even as he gave the word, landing in the boat all right.

He had untied the line and seized the oars before the more cautious Andy came down.

Now the object of their solicitude was a young girl who had appeared in the after gangway of the Red Jacket.

She was gesticulating wildly, and screaming for help. Many saw her.

Several ran for boats lying near to go to her aid, but the cowardly crew of the burning steamer never turned back.

Dick and Andy were the first to start, and consequently the first to reach the burning steamer.

"It's the same girl!" breathed Andy, as they drew near.

"Didn't you know it?" replied Dick. "I did! I recognized her the instant I saw her. Coming, miss! Don't be alarmed! There's lots of time?"

"It's my father!" called the girl, displaying wonderful coolness. "He is paralyzed! Do you think you can lift him into the boat?"

"We'll make a try for it!" cried Dick. "And there are others coming. Hold her steady, Andy! I'll go up!"

"Oh, is it you? Oh, I'm so relieved!" gasped the girl, as Dick, springing up, caught the deck planking and pulled himself over the guard like a monkey.

But it was no time to exchange courtesies.

With a hasty word Dick followed the girl into the cabin where he found a small, dried-up looking old gentleman sitting in a wheel chair.

"Well, well! Am I to be left to burn here like a rat in a trap?" he cried. "Where is everybody? Who's going to get me off this boat?"

"Father, this is not one of the boat-hands. This is the young gentleman who saved my life at Black Bay," said the girl, hastily, evidently afraid that Dick would take offense.

But Dick was not that kind.

"Don't let's waste a moment talking," he said, as the old man tried to say something civil. "Trust to me; I'll save you both. There's really no danger. There are others coming to help."

"I don't want any others; you'll do," broke in the old gentleman. "Just tie a rope under my arms and drop me over the guards. You can lower me down, and Ella will help. Plenty of rope on the deck there. Confound those cowardly beggars! I'll sue for damages. The idea of leaving me like this!"

"Peppery," thought Dick, "but as smart as a steel trap just the same," and he flew around to obey.

The rope was found readily enough, and Dick tied it firmly

around the old man's body under the arms, Ella having pushed the wheel chair out on deck.

There was no trouble at all in lifting him—he weighed no more than a good-sized boy.

He was perfectly cool about it, too, as Dick and Ella lowered him down, bracing the rope against the rail, while the wind, which had shifted, blew a shower of sparks over their heads. Andy stood ready to receive him, and they gently lowered him into the boat.

Then Dick held the rope, while Ella lowered herself down hand over hand.

"That's the talk!" cried the old man. "Come on, boy! You fellows go to blazes! You're too late!" he shouted, shaking his fist at several boatmen, who were pulling hastily up to the burning steamer.

The other boats were decidedly coming "to blazes," but Dick, seizing the oars, pulled away from blazes, with a strong, steady stroke.

"That's the talk!" cried the old man. "Say, young fellow, you seem to hold a first mortgage on life-saving in my family—be hanged if you don't! My name is Caleb Goldwin—what's yours?"

Caleb Goldwin! The rich uncle! The very man Dick was on his way to St. Paul to see.

"Phew!" whistled Andy; adding to himself: "This is a great racket, this is!"

But Dick's heart was in his throat, as he quietly answered: "My name is Richard Wright, sir."

The old man frowned.

"Richard Wright, of Black Bay? Edward Wright's child?"

"My father was Edward Wright, sir."

"Was? Is he dead?"

"These ten years."

"Humph! Small loss. And your mother?"

"I do not recollect her, sir. She died when I was a baby."

"Dead! Well, well!" said the old man slowly. "Boy, you may not know me, but I'm your uncle—you are my sister's son."

CHAPTER III.

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE LUMBER MILL.

"I know it, sir. I was on my way to St. Paul to see you," was Dick Wright's reply when Mr. Goldwin so abruptly announced the relationship between them.

"Oh, you were, were you? What did you want to see me about?" demanded the old millionaire, looking at Dick with a heavy frown.

"Perhaps, sir, it would be better to postpone——"

"I postpone nothing, young man. What do you want? I suppose you know I hated your father, and had not spoken to your mother for some years. When you hear me say that I didn't even know she was dead, you can understand how little you have to expect from me on the score of relationship; as to the services you've rendered Ella and myself—that's another thing. Come now, Ella, you needn't look at me so reproachfully. I say just what I mean, and you know it—boy, go on."

Dick was almost carried off his feet by this abruptness.

The slurs at his parent's memory galled him terribly; had it not been for an encouraging look from Andy and a beseeching one from Ella, he would have "flared up" and spoken his mind, bringing the conversation to an end then and there.

But he controlled himself and quietly told his story, gaining courage as he talked.

Mr. Goldwin listened attentively to all he had to say, and asked several searching questions touching on the condition of the mill plant, the amount of sawed and unsawed lumber on hand, the standing timber, etc., all of which Dick answered with such a display of intelligence that no one understanding

the lumber business, as Caleb Goldwin understood it, could fail to be impressed with the fact that this boy was thoroughly up to his business.

Before Dick was half through talking they were at the wharf, but Mr. Goldwin would not allow a move to be made toward landing till he had asked his last question, but just sat there in the boat with the big fire engines pumping above him, the noise and confusion of the crowd apparently not disturbing him a bit.

"That's enough," he said at last, cutting Dick short in his closing remarks. "Go ashore and call a carriage. Hey, you fellows up there on the wharf! Get a board and a rope and hoist me up. I'm paralyzed. Look alive! I'll pay you a dollar apiece—you three there in front, no more! Hustle now, Dick! Ella, you stay here till I'm up. Keep the boat steady, young man!"

"Great Scott! He's a perfect Tartar!" thought Andy.

Dick went ashore entirely in the dark as to whether his appeal to his uncle had succeeded or not.

It was evident that Mr. Goldwin was a most tyrannical and overbearing character of whom even his daughter stood in awe.

Nor was Dick much the wiser when he took leave of Mr. Goldwin in the carriage, for up to that time the old millionaire had not said a word on the subject.

"Take us to the Riggs House," he called to the driver. Then he held out his hand to Dick.

"Good-by, nephew," he said. "I don't ask you and your friend to come and see us because I don't want to see you; besides, we are going up the lake to Port Arthur as soon as I can find conveyance. As to the matter of the mill, you're young, but at the same time you're smart, and I should say probably up to your business. I had thought of buying the plant myself, for there's money in it. Perhaps I shall do it yet. I won't buy it for you, anyhow, and I never lend money, but I may think of some way to help you out. I'll wire you before the auction. When is it? Friday. All right. I shan't forget. Good-by, Dick."

Slam went the door, and the driver whipped up his horses.

"Good-by, Cousin Dick!" called Ella through the window.

And Dick could only raise his hat and bow as the carriage was whirled away.

Dick and Andy went back up the lake, on the City of Pearl River, but they took precious good care not to breathe a word to anybody in Black Bay as to what they had been about.

Thursday came, and not a word had been heard from Mr. Goldwin. Dick, who had waited with all impatience, was almost in despair. In his heart he had given the whole matter up. After all, it seemed foolish to have expected it to be otherwise. He was only a boy, after all, and he felt that he really had no right to expect a different result.

Meanwhile all Black Bay was on the qui vive about the mill.

The syndicate's man came up on the steamer which had taken the place of the Red Jacket, and openly declared his intention of purchasing the plant, if it did not go too high, for the purpose of taking it down.

Late Thursday night Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein drove into town from Beaver Bay, and put up at the Belden House.

He was a thin, cadaverous-looking man—Dick saw him when he arrived, and recognized him, for he had seen him at the mill in Mr. Van Tassell's time a year before.

"I may as well give it up," he said to Andy. "No news from my uncle, and Wolfstein on the spot. It's no go—I might have known it—anyhow, it was a crazy scheme."

As he spoke, Mr. Wolfstein, who was just entering the door of the hotel, turned and looked at him searchingly.

"He knows you," whispered Andy.

"Mebbe. What do I care? He probably remembers seeing me at the mill. Say, Andy, suppose we walk up to the mill

now and have a last look before the sale, for once the old shop passes into other hands it will never seem the same again."

"I don't object," was the reply, "but all the same, I don't give up hope yet. Something seems to tell me, Dick, that you are going to own that mill."

"It's your good will for me that tells you that, old fellow, and it tells you wrong," replied Dick, as he locked arms with his friend and they walked away.

They had scarcely turned their backs on the Belden House, when Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein appeared at the door.

He put his hand and stroked his long beard, and then turned and went inside again, after a hasty glance around.

At the same instant two rough-looking men, who had been talking together near the horse block, started down the street, passing the boys with a gruff "good-evening."

"Who are those two fellows?" queried Andy.

"Blest if I know. I never saw them before," replied Dick.

Which reply argued that the two men must be strangers, for Dick knew everyone in Black Bay.

Reaching the mill, the boys entered by the open door at the top of the log run.

"It seems wicked to destroy all this," Dick remarked, thoughtfully, "but that's what will be done if the syndicate gets the mill."

"They won't get it—you'll get it," said Andy, in his positive way. "Dick, you'll hear from your uncle yet."

"Hope so, Andy. But, say, we must have a light here if we are going to have a last look."

"Where are you going to get it?"

"Stay where you are, Andy. My lantern is in the office. I could find my way round here blindfolded. I'll go get it, and be back in two shakes."

Dick hurried away into the darkness of the big inclosure.

Andy was able to follow his footsteps by the sound.

He heard him pass between two of the big saw tables and enter the office. Then he heard the match snap and saw the light flash up. Then suddenly it went out again, and Andy, to his utter astonishment, heard another sound which drowned all others.

It was the rushing of the water at the mill gate.

"Great Scott, Dick! The water must have forced the gate!" he shouted.

"Coming!" Dick called back. "The lantern ain't here. I tell you——"

His voice was drowned by the sudden starting of the machinery of the mill.

All in a moment the belts began to shuffle, the shafting creaked, and the big circular saw commenced to buzz.

At the same instant Andy thought he heard a muffled cry.

"Dick! Dick!" he shouted.

There was no answer.

By this time Dick ought to have been with him, but he did not come.

A strange sense of fear seemed to come over Andy, and yet there was nothing so particularly strange in the water forcing up the gate—it had occurred more than once before.

"Dick! Dick!" yelled Andy, again running into the mill.

He had matches in his pocket, and he hastily struck one on his trousers as he ran.

As the feeble flame flared up Andy almost dropped with horror at the sight which met his gaze.

There, stretched upon the table of the big lumber saw, lay Dick.

His face was turned upward, his eyes were closed, his legs hung half over the edge of the table which, propelled by the rush of water beneath the mill, was moving steadily toward the glittering saw.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DAY DICK BOUGHT THE MILL.

Andy Benson's people were among the first settlers of Black Bay, hardy old pioneers, men who learned to think quick and act quick, and Andy was fortunately just like all the rest of his tribe.

If it had been otherwise it would have been all day with poor Dick.

There the boy lay upon the saw table, every revolution of the shafting taking him nearer and nearer to the fatal steel.

But help was at hand. Andy was there!

The boy just made one spring for the saw table.

He seized Dick around the waist, and lifted him away from his dangerous position.

But Dick was a stout fellow, and Andy could not have held him an instant, if he had been a bit less excited than he was.

The next the plucky fellow knew he went sprawling on top of Dick in the sawdust, with the big saw buzzing away above their heads.

Andy caught his breath and sprang to his feet.

"Dick—Dick!" he shouted. "Dick!"

"What is it, Andy?"

The answer came faintly, but it came.

Andy saw that Dick was trying to rise.

A helping hand brought the boy to his feet. Andy threw his arm about him, and supported him to the big open doors at the log run.

Then the moonlight, striking full upon them, showed him Dick's face deathly pale, with a big bruise on his forehead.

Dick was gasping for breath, and all mixed up in his mind, so they just stood there for a few moments, Andy supporting his friend, and neither speaking a word, until Dick suddenly pulled himself together and exclaimed:

"Where is he, Andy? Where is he? Say, he mustn't escape."

"Who?" cried Andy.

"The fellow who hit me."

"Dick, I couldn't see—were you hit? Didn't you run against the table in the dark?"

"Hit—yes! Someone knocked me silly just as I was lighting the lantern."

"Dick, I saw no one—I didn't hear."

"Look at my head! How did I come on the office floor where you found me?"

"I didn't find you on the office floor! You were on the saw table, and——"

"The saw table! Great heavens, no! And the speed is on, too! Who started up the mill, Andy? What does it all mean?"

Evidently Dick was still a little rattled.

Now that it was all over poor Andy was so badly scared that he could scarcely speak.

But at last he made Dick understand—every moment seemed to make his brain clearer.

To say that Dick was horrified at his narrow escape scarcely expresses it, but he was not the boy to waste time in words.

"Shut the gate!" he cried. "That's the first thing!"

Andy ran to the water gate and jammed it down into place.

Without waiting for his return, and entirely heedless of what might happen, Dick groped his way into the office and lit the lantern.

Andy met him near the saw table as he hurried back into the mill.

"Was I there—was I really there?" gasped Dick, pointing to the table.

"Dick, you were!"

"But how came I there? Last I remember someone gave me a knockout blow in the office."

"Did you see the fellow?"

"No, I didn't. The light went out—it was done in the dark."

"Then whoever hit you must have picked you up and put you on the saw table, Dick, for there you were, and——"

"And I'd have been dead in a second if you hadn't saved me! Andy, I shall never forget this night!"

"No, I don't think you will," replied Andy, dryly. "But come, there's no use talking any more. You've got an enemy—that's what. Someone don't intend that you shall bid at the sale to-morrow, and that's what, too. Shall we look for the scoundrel, or shall we just light out and go home?"

They had their look, of course, but they found no one.

Every nook and corner of the mill was searched in vain.

Dick slept with Andy that night, if it could be called sleeping, for the boys never closed their eyes till near morning, talking and pondering over the mystery.

When they went out on the street next morning it was with the firm resolve not to mention the matter to anyone.

Certainly this was a wise determination if they hoped to find out the truth of the matter, and still more certain is it that it would have been a vast mistake to have mentioned it to the first man they met, for this man happened to be Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein, the rich Jew lumber dealer, who was taking his morning walk.

At the sight of the boys he stopped short, stared, turned on his heel, and went back into the Belden House, although he had but just come out.

"What's the matter with Wolfstein?" cried Andy. "He stared at you, Dick, as though he had seen a ghost."

"Blest if I'll ever tell you," replied Dick. "The man don't know me—he can't."

Perhaps Dick was right, but Mr. Wolfstein certainly stared very hard when they met on the court house steps later in the day.

The hour of the auction had come.

Quite a crowd had gathered at the court house to see the big lumber property which had so long supported the town pass into the hands of the highest bidder.

It was a very serious matter for Black Bay.

The bread and butter of half those present depended upon the mill directly or indirectly, and the men gathered in little groups, some expressing one opinion, and some another.

Some were ready to bet that Wolfstein would get it; others were sure the Chicago syndicate would be the purchasers; others still talked of Mr. Goldwin, but those were only few, as so far as was known the rich St. Paul lumber man had no representative in town.

But the last person in the world anybody thought of as the possible purchaser was young Dick Wright, and Dick, as he stood there with Andy waiting for Mr. Mudgett, the auctioneer, to start the sale, was entirely of the same opinion himself.

It was no use hoping against hope.

The time had passed, and the long-looked-for telegram had not come.

"Too blame bad, Dick," whispered Andy consolingly. "Never mind, old man, the world is wide even if rich uncles are mean. Tell you what, let's you and I go out to Park City, Utah. They say the lumber business is just booming there."

"I'd have made it boom in Black Bay if I could have had the chance," said Dick, gloomily. "But it's no use talking; fate's against me—look out! What are you doing? Hello, Charley—that you?"

It was not fate who had come up hard against Dick just then, but only Charley Steers, the telegraph operator, and next to Andy the young mill boy's best friend.

"Dick!" gasped Charley, all out of breath, holding both hands behind his back. "Say, Dick, which hand will you choose—right or left?"

Before Dick could reply Mr. Mudgett appeared at the top of the courthouse steps, and shouted:

"Gentlemen, I am now about to offer to the highest bidder the valuable mill property, log booms, water power rights and timber land belonging to the estate of our late fellow townsman, Mr. Isaac Van Tassell, sold by order of the court for benefit of the creditors of the estate. Now, then, gentlemen, you all know this property—many of you who have frozen your toes cutting timber up in Section 38 know it to your sorrow, but you are the very ones who know best that Mr. Van Tassell had only begun to touch his timber lands. You can back me up when I say that acres upon acres of the best pine is still standing; trees without a blemish and the tallest in the State; trees which will furnish clear stuff till you can't rest; trees which were old when Father Hennipin first discovered the Mississippi river. Do I say 'Woodmen, spare them trees,' fellow citizens? No, I don't say anything of the sort! I say buy 'em and cut 'em down! I say buy the best mill in the United States, and saw 'em up and give work to them as needs work. I say—but I won't say no more, gentlemen! The sale is on! I hold a bid for twenty thousand dollars on this property! Who'll raise me five thousand? Don't all speak at once, gentlemen! Twenty—make it twenty-five! Twenty—twenty-five—twenty—twenty-five! That's right, sir! Twenty-five I'm offered! Twenty-five—twenty-five! Who'll give thirty? Twenty-five! Going at twenty-five thousand dollars! Now, come, gentlemen! This is all nonsense! Everybody knows that this plant is worth a hundred thousand dollars if it's worth ten cents! No, Mr. Wolfstein! I won't make it twenty-six! I'll raise five thousand at a clip or I won't raise at all! I—hold on, gentlemen! I shall have to raise a little more breath before I can go any further, and I propose to do it by taking a drink."

It was only a glass of water which Mr. Mudgett stopped to imbibe, for by this time he had shouted himself quite hoarse.

"Dick," whispered Andy at this moment, "oh, Dick! I'm so glad!"

"Thought I'd hustle it up myself, Dick," said Charley Steers. "I wouldn't have had a miss made of it for a farm. Go in and win, old man! By gracious, I only hope you may get the mill!"

For Dick held an open telegram in his hand, which he had just read aloud to Andy, and now Charley hurried away up the steps to Mr. Mudgett with another which he had read to both the boys, for its last line said, "read this to Dick Wright."

Mr. Mudgett took the yellow paper, read it over twice, and, crumpling it up, jammed it into his coat pocket, never looking at Dick.

"Now, then, gentlemen!" he shouted, "I have had my drink, and we return to business! I have imbibed of the cup which neither cheers nor inebriates, and I shall proceed to sell the mill! Twenty-five thousand I'm bid! Come, Wolfstein, Chicago's got you! Make it thirty! Twenty-five—thirty—twenty-five—ah, yes! thanks! Thirty thousand dollars bid! Thirty—thirty-five—thirty-five—forty—forty—forty-five—forty—"

"Hold on!" cried Wolfstein. "Dere vas no pid of forty tousan! No fakes, Mr. Man!"

"Who's running this sale?" cried the auctioneer. "I say I have forty thousand! Do you think there's no one else here with a dollar in their breeches' pockets but you and Chicago?"

"Forty-five thousand!" cried the Chicago man. "Get ahead there! Get ahead!"

"Fifty thousand bid! Fifty thousand!" yelled Mudgett.

Who was the mysterious bidder? No one had been seen to make a move or heard to speak a word.

Yet so it went on.

Chicago went five better. Mudgett raised it ten. Wolfstein wildly made it sixty thousand. Budgett shouted sixty-five. Then the Jew began to sputter, and the Chicago man to bully.

"Going! Going, at sixty-five thousand!" yelled Mudgett. "Gentlemen, are you all done?"

"Schtup! I protest! Dis is a fake sale!" bawled the Jew. "Going! Going! Going! Gone for sixty-five thousand dollars to Richard Wright!" bellowed Mudgett. "And I say hooray for Black Bay! We'll keep our mill and run it! We'll run every Chicago mill-smasher off the earth!"

CHAPTER V.

MR. DARLEY DARLINGTON TAKES A DIP.

The excitement around the court house steps when Mr. Mudgett gave the cheer for Black Bay was tremendous.

Then all at once it seemed to dawn on everyone that it was Dick who had bought the mill.

Nothing strange about that either, for almost everybody knew that Dick had a rich uncle in the lumber business, and that said uncle was the very man whom half of Black Bay believed would buy the property.

So he had bought it—bought it for Dick.

They cheered and shouted and crowded about the boy, asking a thousand questions, which he didn't know how to answer, and wouldn't have answered if he had.

The Chicago agent laughed good-humoredly at Mr. Mudgett's slur on his city.

"Never you mind, old man; Chicago will take care of itself," he cried. "Anyhow, I'm glad the mill is going to run, if it's only for the sake of the town."

He was a real jolly fellow, that Chicago agent, and afterward he came and patted Dick on the back and told him to go in and win.

But Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein went wild, and showed his teeth with a vengeance.

"It vas a fraud! It vas a fake!" he yelled. "I vill appeal to de courts! I vill have de sale over again vonce more already! I vill haf your auctioneer's license took away, Meester Mudgett! Dere vas no pid made."

"You're a sheeny liar!" roared Mudgett, full of fight. "Dick nodded his head each time, and that nod meant \$5,000."

"Vat! Vat! You dakes de nod of a poy against de pid of a peezness man!"

"Well, I just do!" cried Mudgett.

"Let him put up his money! Dwenty tousand dollar! Dat's de margin?"

"Already up, hook nose!" shouted Mudgett, waving Dick's telegram which had been passed up the steps by Andy.

He read the telegram aloud.

It was an order for twenty thousand dollars signed by the Western Union Telegraph Co.

Then he read his own telegram, which was signed by Mr. Goldwin, stating that Dick's bid was to be received for any amount up to \$100,000, and he would make it good.

After learning that Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein simply sneaked away, and Dick became the lumber king of Black Bay from that moment.

Of course, people looked upon him as merely the representative of his uncle.

Yet it was not so. Weeks passed, and Dick never heard one word from Mr. Goldwin.

Business communications came to him, it is true, but they were from a firm of lawyers in St. Paul.

Dick assumed them to be his uncle's attorneys, but he did not know it to be so.

He was required to sign certain papers, and he signed them.

Notes he could not give, for he was not of age.

The papers Dick did not fully understand.

They were the assignment of certain rights in the property; they provided for the payment of the advances made, and guaranteed the payment of the balance of the purchase money for the property. They made Mr. Goldwin Dick's legal guardian, and covered other points not necessary to mention here.

Dick took them to old Squire Pine, Mr. Van Tassell's lawyer, who studied them carefully.

"They are all right, Dick," he said. "A most liberal arrangement. Leaves you in perfect freedom, and sole owner of the mill after the debt is paid to your uncle."

"And will the mill really be mine after I have come of age?"

"It's yours now, boy. Let me congratulate you. It's a big stroke of luck for one of your age, but don't hold your head too high. There's trouble in the wind, and you may as well know it first as last."

"What do you mean?" asked Dick, a cold chill striking him as the fear came into his mind that there was some trick in all this.

"Just this," replied the squire: "Wolfstein has applied to the court to have the sale declared void, and, pending the decision, he has begun action for replevin on a part of the property to secure an indebtedness of Mr. Van Tassell to his firm. Should his case be sustained you may be ousted; but cheer up; I know Mr. Goldwin. He'll stand by you—he's a man who never does anything half way."

No rose without a thorn, they say, and this matter bothered Dick more than a little.

But he put aside all anxious thoughts bravely, and went to work with a will.

The mill was opened on Monday morning with a full complement of men, their pay being provided for by the St. Paul firm, who wrote Dick that ten thousand dollars as working capital had been placed to his credit in the Lumberman's National Bank at Minneapolis.

Dick went right into the mill, took off his coat, and started in to saw up the logs on hand, with a view to turning them into cash as speedily as possible.

No one advised him to do this—no one advised him on any point. He was left entirely free to do as he pleased.

So, with Dick on the floor, and Andy in the office attending to the books, business went on swimmingly through the last weeks of September.

The big booms were all sawed up, and a huge raft constructed, to be run out upon the lake and down to Duluth before the close of navigation.

Once it was in Duluth, Dick knew that he would have no difficulty in obtaining a heavy advance from any bank in Minnesota on the raft.

This would enable him to meet his engagements to return the ten thousand advanced for working capital, and leave him a handsome balance to begin the winter's work in the woods.

"How much do you think she'll fetch, Dick?" asked Andy one morning, as they stood together at the top of the log run, looking down at the men who were working on the raft.

"I estimate that lumber at fully eighteen thousand," replied Dick. "You see, Andy, it is nearly all clear stuff, and a good deal of it runs thick. Of course no one can tell what turn the market will take, though, and there's no use counting one's chickens before they are hatched."

"That's so," replied Andy. "But all the same yours will hatch out in good shape, Dick."

"That's all right, Andy. You are always encouraging, still I don't feel as though I were out of the woods yet. It looks tremendously like a storm, and we should be in a pretty pickle if the raft should happen to break up and go over the falls, as poor old Van Tassell's did last year."

Dick proved a good weather prophet.

That night it began to rain, and it rained for three days and three nights a steady downpour.

The river rose almost to its height at the season of the spring floods.

During this terrible storm, the danger to the raft was great, and Dick and Andy never left it for an instant, never caught

a wink of sleep or a change of their wet clothes; their meals were brought out on the raft to them, and they ate them in the rain.

It stopped raining at half-past four on Thursday morning, and by sunrise the great storm was a thing of the past.

Everything now being secure, the two tired boys started for the mill, when the workmen came.

They had just ascended the steps which took them to the top of the slippery log run when Charley Steers, who had been made assistant bookkeeper by Dick only the week before, came running out with his hair all standing on end, so to speak.

"Gracious, Charley, what's the matter?" asked Dick, seeing his excitement.

Charley could hardly get the words out, he was so rattled.

"Oh, Dick!" he exclaimed, "the sheriff's in the office, and he's putting seals on everything. He's ordered the men to quit work, and there's a little tissue paper dude with him who says he's going to take charge here."

"What!" gasped Dick. "Oh, Andy, this is tough! And we would have started the raft at noon!"

"They shan't do it!" cried Andy. "I'll appeal to the men! We'll fire 'em out! We'll ride 'em on a rail and tar and feather 'em!"

"Hold on! Hold on! That won't do. It's that infernal replevin suit, I suppose. Here they come. By gracious, it's that little runt, Darley Darlington. He works for my uncle. I'm afraid there's something all wrong here."

"Keep cool, Dick," whispered Charley.

"Talk to Andy," replied Dick. "I don't slop over, you bet."

"Ah, good-morning, Mr. Wright!" exclaimed the sheriff, superciliously, as he approached. "I hope I see you well this morning. Been quite a storm."

"Yes," replied Dick, "a hard storm, and it seems it ain't over yet. What do you want here, Mr. Rice?"

"Well, now, you better ask Mr. Darlington," said the sheriff. "He's the boss of this racket, and I'm only acting under orders. Work has got to stop here, and that's all there is about it, for my orders are to seal everything up."

"Yes," added young Darlington, in an offensive tone, without returning Dick's polite bow; "you fellows have got to get out. Mr. Wolfstein, my employer, has obtained an order from the courts to— What's that you say?"

"If you're hard of hearing I'll say it again," replied Dick. "I asked you since when you had been working for Mr. Wolfstein, and I think you heard me, too."

"Well, I don't recognize your right to ask me any questions at all," snapped little Darlington, adjusting the flower in his buttonhole and twirling his cane, "but all the same I'll tell you that I left old Goldwin two months ago. I'm working for Mr. Wolfstein now."

"Be careful how you speak of my uncle," said Dick, frowning.

"Well, I'll speak as I please! He's the meanest old hunk in Minnesota, and if it wasn't that I didn't want to break off my acquaintance with that nifty little dame, Ella, I'd——"

"Stop!" shouted Dick. "Don't you dare speak of that young lady in such a way!"

"And why not, my high and mighty mill owner without a mill?" sneered the dude. "If you want to know the truth, Ella was dead mashed on me, and I——"

It was too much for Dick, and he just exploded.

His firm resolve to keep cool vanished like smoke, and he hauled off and dealt the dude a blow under the chin which sent him sprawling back upon the wet and slippery log run.

"Haw, haw, haw!" laughed the sheriff, and he really couldn't help it, for Darley Darlington, with his arms and legs beating the air, went spinning down the log run like lightning.

A second later and poor Darley, with his fine clothes all spoiled, was floundering in the water at the foot of the run.

CHAPTER VI.

A DASTARDLY DEED.

It is really very strange how things sometimes come about.

Just as Mr. Darley Darlington was cutting such an absurd figure in the water a handsome carriage came along the river road, and who should Dick spy sitting on the front seat with the driver but the very person in whose interest he had dealt the dude that hasty blow.

In short, it was Ella Goldwin, and with her was a pleasant-faced, matronly lady and a business-like gentleman.

They seemed to be heading directly for the mill, but, seeing the excitement, Ella ordered the driver to stop the horses, and they all sat there watching while Dick and Andy drew the dripping dude up to the run at the end of a rope which had been thrown to him immediately after the fall.

Ella laughed heartily, and really she could not help it.

"Oh, Mr. Darlington, you did look so funny, holding on to that rope," she said, banteringly, when they all met in the office a few minutes later. "However did you come to fall into the river? I thought you and I had enough of that business when we were here before."

"I'm not here to talk or be insulted," growled Darley. "As for you, Miss Goldwin, I'm not working for your father, and since you cut me that day on Nicolet avenue I've crossed you off my list."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Ella. "Really, I'm very glad to hear it. Pray, never put me on again. If I was given to slang, I should advise you to dry up, for you seem to be very wet, but as I ain't, I'll just turn my back on you and ask Cousin Dick how he's getting along with his mill."

Dick blushed and was about to reply when the sheriff interfered.

"Come, come!" he cried. "I've no time to waste here. Darlington, I advise you to sue that fellow for assault. Ladies and gents, you'll have to step outside. I hold an order from the court to seal up this place!"

"And I hold one to order you off the premises," said the gentleman who had accompanied Ella. "My name is Parfitt. I am Mr. Goldwin's attorney. Here you are, sheriff. You can look over these papers; you'll see that they are all straight."

Straight they probably were, although it was all Greek to Dick, for the sheriff merely glanced at them, and removed off with Darley Darlington, who never opened his mouth after Ella gave him that parting shot.

"Good! That's the end of that stupid trick," said Mr. Parfitt, after the door closed behind them. "Now, then, young man, I'll explain this business to you, and talk about several other matters. You'll excuse us, Miss Goldwin. I've no time to waste."

"Certainly," replied Ella. "I know you've got to take the steamer. You see, Dick, we haven't deserted you. Father is peculiar, but he's all business, and you needn't be one bit afraid of anything that horrid Wolfstein can do."

"I'm sure I appreciate——" began Dick, when Ella cut him short.

"Don't say a word. While you are talking business, may Mrs. McIntosh and I have a look at the mill?"

"Certainly," replied Dick. "Andy, show the ladies through the mill. If you will wait until I am through, Miss Ella, I——"

"No, no! Ella—just Ella, and I won't wait. I'll go with Andy, who is just as old a friend as you are yourself, Dick."

Andy blushed up to his ear-tips, and led the way out into the mill, where they could not hear themselves speak for the noise of the big buzzing saws.

"Now, Dick," said Mr. Parfitt, "you know me through our

correspondence, and all I've got to say is that Mr. Goldwin is entirely pleased with your course so far. This suit of Wolfstein's amounts to nothing. I had the order reversed within an hour after it was issued. Just let me see your books, and we'll come down to business. I shall visit you once in a while just to see that you toe the mark, but otherwise everything is to be left in your own hands."

Mr. Parfitt spent half an hour with Dick, who completely forgot his fatigue in his earnestness to explain everything.

Then Mr. Parfitt shook hands and hurried away, expressing himself as entirely satisfied with everything that had been done thus far, and Dick went out into the mill to look for Ella, who had not yet returned.

He found that Andy had escorted the ladies out upon the big raft, and he hastened to join them.

"Oh, here you are!" cried Ella. "Dick, this is immense! Father never put up such a raft as this in his life. Do you know I should like to go down the lake with you? Everything is as snug as can be in your little house there, and I think the trip would be good fun. Don't you, Mrs. Mac?"

"Dear me—no!" cried Mrs. McIntosh. "I should be scared to death. Suppose this thing should go to pieces? Do you know I'm afraid now, the water is rushing so toward those horrible falls."

"Oh, there's no danger," replied Dick. "You ought to have seen it in the storm. Andy and I have been three nights on board here, and—look to that bow line there, Andy! Seems to me she's working a bit, and—merciful goodness! What is this!"

Well might Dick exclaim—well might he turn pale, as he certainly did.

For even as he spoke, the towline snapped like a pipe stem, and the big raft swung out into the rushing stream.

Mrs. McIntosh screamed and caught hold of Ella.

But they had to look out for themselves, for Dick and Andy made one rush for the other two lines, which were straining terribly.

They snapped ere they could reach them.

"Cut through!" gasped Dick, bending over the broken rope. "Oh, Andy, whose work is this?"

"It's ours to save the raft!" cried Andy. "Quick! The hooks! Help here! Help! Throw us a line! Do something or we'll be over the falls!"

The boys made a rush for the big boat hooks in the hopes of being able to catch on the boom and stay the progress of the raft.

The mill men, in answer to Andy's shout, came rushing out, but they could do nothing at all.

A line was thrown, it is true, but Dick could not hold it.

As for the hooks, they were useless, for the raft had already been seized by the rushing current and whirled out into mid-stream.

"Are we lost, Dick?" asked Ella, quietly, calming her frightened companion as best she could.

"No," replied Dick, with equal coolness. "We are going to try to drive her on the Heads. Keep up your courage, Ella! Andy, get out the sweeps! Drive her in, boy! Drive her in! Oh, if I only had my hand on the scoundrel who cut those lines!"

But the wish was as useless as the attempt the boys made to control the movement of the raft.

The current was too strong for them.

All the tugging and pulling that they were able to exert on the big oars went for nothing.

The raft swung around, passing clear of the mouth of the canal which would have taken it in safety out upon the lake, drifting slowly but surely toward the brink of the falls over

which the waters of the Oklawaha were rushing with thunderous roar.

CHAPTER VII.

OVER THE FALLS.

Dick Wright was full of pluck, if ever a boy lived who possessed that article.

But Dick had another quality, which, in boy or man, is better than pluck—he never gave way to despair.

When things were at their worst, Dick, instead of giving up, always started in to make them better.

The time had now come when this quality was to be put to the severest test, for the big lumber raft was heading straight for the falls, and no power on earth could stop it.

Dick saw this and immediately started in to make the best of the situation.

"Pull in your sweep, Andy!" he cried. "We've got to go, old man, and there is no use kicking. We want to look out for the ladies and save their lives if worst comes to worst."

"What shall I do, Dick?" replied Andy, quietly.

Frightened he certainly was—horribly frightened; but Dick's coolness gave him courage, and he at once abandoned a cowardly thought which would come into his mind.

Both these boys were excellent swimmers.

Of course, all they had to do was to take to the water and save themselves.

But to stem that rushing current, hampered by two women, was not to be thought of.

To attempt to save themselves was to abandon Ella and Mrs. McIntosh to their fate.

"Get the small lines and we'll tie them to loose planks," said Dick, hurriedly. "That will at least give them a chance for life."

Andy rushed to the little house at the stern of the raft.

Dick stepped up to Ella, who stood quietly supporting Mrs. McIntosh, no easy matter, for the good woman had fainted dead away.

"Dick, are we going to lose our lives?" asked Ella, before Dick could speak.

"We are going over the falls, Ella. If the raft breaks up it may be all day with us, but even so there is a chance."

"You cannot stop it?"

"No."

"Do you think it will break?"

"Ella, I must not deceive you; this thing has happened several times in the history of Black Bay; no raft ever held together yet."

"Then we are lost, Dick; I can't swim, and Mrs. Mac has fainted; there is but one thing for you and Andy to do, jump in and save yourselves."

"Ella," cried Dick, "do you think for an instant that I would do a thing like that? I tell you no! I'd rather die a hundred deaths! As for Andy he can do as he pleases, but if he leaves this raft I'm done with him forever!"

"Spoken like the noble fellow that you are, Dick. You've said enough! Whatever you tell me to do I'll do, and I don't fear death, either. Something seems to tell me that we shall yet be saved."

"I believe you! I believe the raft will hold!"

"And then——"

"Then it's all right. We may get shaken up and we are sure of a good wetting—it will be no worse. But we must not talk any more, for here comes Andy with the ropes."

"Ropes, for what, Dick?"

"To tie you and Mrs. McIntosh to the planks, Ella. It must be done. In case the raft breaks up it is your only hope."

"Then it shall be done, Dick. Whatever you say is all right.

Do your best and I will do mine by being as hopeful and encouraging as I can."

Now, while this conversation was going on, a big crowd had collected on the shore beyond the mill and on the "Heads," as the projecting banks at the mouth of the canal were called.

But there was no shouting, no calling out to the boys to do this, that or the other thing as might have been expected. This because there was nothing to do, and no one believed that it was possible to save the big raft from destruction.

So the mill hands and the good people of Black Bay just stood and watched with breathless awe to see the raft take the fatal plunge.

And everyone was impressed with the coolness of Dick and Ella.

There they stood, quietly talking, as though entirely unconscious of their danger, and yet all knew that no one understood the situation better than Dick.

As they continued to watch they saw Andy come with the rope—saw Mrs. McIntosh laid down upon one of the planks and tied to it—saw Ella secured in the same way, and Dick and Andy take their places beside them, armed with long spiked poles.

"Hooray for Dick Wright!" shouted Charley Steers. "He'll come out ahead yet!"

Then the crowd, catching the boy's enthusiasm, began to shout encouraging words.

"Don't give up, Dick!" yelled Charlie. "She'll hold together! Keep up your courage, old man!"

Dick took off his hat and waved to the crowd in answer.

That ended it.

The raft was right at the brink of the falls now.

"Run, fellows! Run! Run for the wharf and be ready to throw Dick a line!" shouted Charley.

Off he started and a few joined him, but the rest waited, watching breathlessly, and in a moment they saw the nose of the raft thrust far over the rushing water.

Little by little it edged out further, then stopped as though grounded on some projecting rock, as was actually the case.

Dick and Andy drove their poles hard into the timber and braced themselves for the final shock.

A moment more of breathless suspense and then it came.

The stern of the raft was seen to rise high into the air as the bow went rushing over the brink, shot down the fifty foot fall and struck hard upon the rocks below.

The shock was tremendous.

The watchers saw the boys taken off their feet, but they held bravely to the poles, and as the nose of the raft rose there they were half under water, but still holding on.

"The women are goners, but the boys will be saved," the people cried.

Even as they spoke the nose of the raft rose higher—higher—higher still, and the stern came down upon the rocks with a terrific crash.

That was the end.

No one really expected to see the mass of timber hold together then, but hold it did, for Dick had seen to it that it was secured as it never had been secured before.

An instant later and the raft with not a timber displaced, was rushing along the rapids at terrific speed toward the lake, and a thundering cheer went from the shore.

On board, Dick and Andy were up and dressed and ready for business.

"Lay for the line!" shouted Dick. "The worst is over, but we don't want to go out into the lake."

They rushed to the head of the raft, for a moment more would take them past Long Wharf, where Charley Steers and a few others were gathered.

But what of Ella?

Dick did not know—he had no time to think, but he knew that Mrs. Mac must still live, as she was screaming lustily, and he assumed that it must be all right with Ella, too.

On flew the raft.

Dick and Andy dropped their poles and stood ready.

So did Charley with a stout rope made fast to the stanchion at the end of the wharf.

Charley threw it as the raft came sweeping by.

Dick caught it; Andy grabbed hold further up and both boys held on desperately.

No use!

The raft was not to be checked in its mad flight by any such effort.

The next Dick knew he was sprawling on top of Andy.

The raft rushed by the wharf and went shooting out into the lake.

CHAPTER VIII.

MR. DARLEY DARLINGTON PLAYS A MEAN TRICK.

"That settles it! We're off!" exclaimed Andy, as he scrambled to his feet.

"Don't you say a word. If Ella is all right I'll throw up my hat and call it a go!" cried Dick.

"Charley! Hey, Charley!" he shouted.

"Hello! Raft ahoy!" yelled Charley from the wharf.

"Run to Captain Speer and tell him to come out to us on the Docket. Hustle the crew together! They can follow us on the Blackbird! We'll go right along!"

"O. K., Dick! Everything all right on board?"

"Far as I know!" shouted Andy, for Dick had hurried toward the part of the raft where Ella and Mrs. McIntosh lay, and did not stop to reply.

Ella waved her hand to him as he approached.

"I'm all right, Dick!" she exclaimed, cheerfully. "So's Mrs. Mac; she's got over her fright and won't make any more fuss."

"Oh, put me on shore! Put me on shore, Mr. Wright!" cried Mrs. McIntosh. "Oh, dear me! I shall die! I know I shall!"

"What's the use of dying now that the danger is all over?" said Dick, cheerfully.

He whipped out his knife and set the ladies free from their uncomfortable position, assisting them to their feet.

"Is the danger really over, Dick?" asked Ella.

"Why, certainly; the raft came down nobly. But how are you?"

"Wet," laughed Ella.

"Every bone in my body is broken!" grumbled Mrs. McIntosh.

"Oh, no!" cried Ella; "nothing of the sort, Mrs. Mac—you're only scared."

"It is—I tell you it is! I want to get off this raft right away."

"Then you'll have to walk on the water," said Ella. "How can Dick put you ashore?"

"Don't worry; I've sent for two tugs," said Dick, "and one of them shall take you two ladies right back to Black Bay as soon as we can get you aboard; but, as there may be some little delay, I advise you to go into the house and dry your clothes the best you can. I'll build up a fire, and you shall make Mrs. McIntosh a cup of coffee, Ella. It's the best I can do for you—I wish it was more."

"The best is all anybody can do, Dick," laughed Ella. "Come, Mrs. Mac, we'll make ourselves as comfortable as we can under the circumstances. Don't be surprised, Dick, if you find we've cooked breakfast for you and Andy. If I can't do anything else on a raft, I can at least do that."

"She's the kind of a girl to have around," said Andy, admiringly, coming up, after Dick had built a fire in the little stove and left the ladies to themselves.

"She's as brave as they make 'em," replied Dick. "Not a complaint, not a murmur. If she had been as cranky as the other they'd both have been dead now."

"Wouldn't wonder. Dick, didn't the raft do nobly?"

"Well she did, Andy. This comes of nailing down those cross bars. I told you it would pay."

"You were dead right, but look here, Dick, this current is taking us out into the lake very fast."

"It's good for two miles, Andy."

"I suppose so. Of course you'll go right on to Duluth?"

"Got to. What else can we do?"

"Well, we can't go back, that's certain."

"Not much; besides there's trouble ahead."

"What?"

"Fog! Don't you see?"

"Blest if I noticed it, but I see now."

"You ought to; there lies the bank right in front of us, it's the last of the old storm, and the wind is shifting to the eastward; I'm afraid it will blow in on us."

"Gracious, Dick! Then we will be in the soup."

"In the fog, Andy, and goodness knows when we shall get out again. If we only had our sails it wouldn't be so bad."

"That's right. The masts haven't moved their lashings and can be stepped at any moment, but we can't make much headway without sails; pity they weren't put aboard."

"It can't be helped now. We'd better take a survey and see if everything is solid."

They found it so. There had been almost no working of the timbers, and this went to prove what care and pains will do. Dick had observed the greatest care in building the raft.

During their survey they came to the ends of the lines at which it needed but one glance to read the story of treachery, for they had been cut above and below with a sharp knife—the only wonder was that the raft had held a moment after the cuts were made.

"Who could have done it?" exclaimed Dick.

"I'll never tell you," said Andy, "but it's my opinion that whoever put you on that saw table the night before the sale could explain this dirty business, too, if he would."

"Ah!" cried Dick. "But who is that?"

"There's the mystery. The long and short of it is, Dick, you've got an enemy and the chances are we haven't seen the last of him yet."

"I don't know what to think," said Dick, "but I know this, I wish the tugs would come."

"They haven't even started," said Andy, anxiously looking toward the shore. "Charley Steers must have gone to sleep."

"Not at all. Charley will do the best he can; but I tell you what it is, Andy, there's something in the wind, or Captain Speer would have started before this."

Dick was quite right; there was something "in the wind," and that something had driven Charley Steers half wild.

For when Charley got down to where the tug Rocket lay he found Mr. Darley Darlington ahead of him.

"It's a bargain, cap," he heard the dude say as he climbed upon the deck.

Captain Speer, who was a rough spoken man, and bore the reputation of being none too straight in his business transactions, nodded in the affirmative and turned to Charley.

Mr. Darley Darlington stood by grinning as he lit a cigarette.

"Well, what are you after?" snapped the tug owner, for poor Charley had run so fast that he was all out of breath.

"Want you to go to the raft and help Dick Wright!" gasped Charley.

"I won't go!"

"What!"

"I say I won't go. Don't you understand English?"

"Captain, you must be crazy. You signed the contract, and——"

"The contract's broken. I agreed to take the raft at the mill and not to go chasing after her all over Lake Superior. Besides, I can't go now, I've just agreed to run both tugs up to Mr. Wolfstein's mill at Port Arthur. Dick Wright will have to do the best he can."

"You're a big fraud!" shouted Charley, "and there stands a worse one! For two cents I could punch your head, Captain Speer? The idea of it! No other tugs in Black Bay but yours and——"

But Charley got no further, for Captain Speer was a powerful man and he just seized the boy by the collar and lifted him bodily off upon the wharf.

Could Dick have seen and heard this, he would have understood why the tugs did not come, and why, when they did actually start and he thought they were coming, they sheered off and steamed away into the fog bank and disappeared.

Poor Dick was in despair then, and Andy was furious.

"What does it mean?" asked Ella, coming out of the house. "Aren't the tugs coming, Dick?"

"I'm afraid not, Ella. There's something wrong."

"But you had engaged them, Dick?"

"Yes. Had a written contract with Captain Speer to take us to Duluth."

"Dick, that's Darlington's work!" cried Ella, shrewdly guessing the truth.

"I wonder if it can be?"

"It is! You may depend upon it! What can you do?"

"Nothing."

"Then come in and get your breakfast and we'll take it easy. Of course someone will pick us up in time."

"Look! Look!" cried Andy, "there comes a boat!"

"Yes, and Charley Steers is in it," said Dick. "We shall know all about it now if——"

Dick paused and looked anxiously to the eastward.

"If what?" asked Ella.

"If we don't lose ourselves in the fog before Charley can come up with us."

And Dick's fear was well founded, for this was exactly what happened.

Charley saw the danger, and worked his oars like a Trojan.

No use though!

He was still a long way from the raft when the fog came sweeping over them.

In an instant the boat and the shore beyond had vanished.

The big lumber raft was enveloped in a damp, impenetrable mist.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK BOARDS A MYSTERIOUS PRIZE.

Andy gave way to an exclamation of despair.

"Here's trouble," he cried. "Dick, I don't believe we are ever going to get out of this; we'll just drift down the lake and go to pieces on the rocks as sure as fate."

"Come now! None of that!" said Ella. "What can't be cured must be endured, and those who don't come to my hot breakfast now will get it cold which will be an insult to the cook, and that positively can't be endured."

"That's right," said Dick. "Go on, Andy, and get your breakfast, you're all tried out and hungry into the bargain. This fog will clear up by and by and our prospects with it. The raft is going to land at Duluth, and don't you make any mistake."

"Can't you come to breakfast, too, Dick? Mrs. Mac has quieted down all right now and won't make any more fuss," Ella said.

"Oh, it ain't Mrs. Mac who is keeping me away, Ella. Somebody must watch."

"I suppose so, and somebody must sleep, too. Who told me he had not slept for three nights?"

"I'm the man, Ella, but Andy's worse used up than I am, feed him and put him to sleep and you'll do me the biggest kind of service."

"Captain, your orders shall be obeyed."

Ella saluted military fashion, and followed Andy into the house with a merry laugh.

"A girl in a thousand," thought Dick. "She'll never wear her husband out with useless complaints. But I must get to work and stick to it if I mean to save the raft."

And Dick went about his work in the quiet, methodical manner which characterized everything he did.

First he got at the big rudder and, unaided, managed to set it in place.

Then he took another survey of the raft to see if any of the timbers were working, and drove home a few spikes which had started out of place.

This done, he took the tiller and made an effort to keep the raft headed in a southwesterly direction, shaping his course by the wind.

Of course he knew that he could only approximate his position, and he even felt doubtful whether the raft was making much headway, for he could no longer discover any indication of the river current, still he kept it from swinging round and round, and the wind was certainly helping a little to carry him on his way.

All this time Dick was listening—something everyone does instinctively in a fog.

More than once he thought he could distinguish the sound of oars, and half expected to see Charley Steers' boat come out of the fog, but in each instance he found himself mistaken, for, in fact, there was nothing to break the awesome stillness but the lapping of the waves against the timbers of the raft.

After a little Andy came out very much refreshed by his meal.

"By Jove, Dick, she's cooked a bully breakfast," he said; "you must go in and get some. Anything new, old man?"

"No, Andy; nor there won't be until the fog lifts."

"Which may not be for a couple of days."

"That's right."

"Pleasant prospect! I wish I had that infernal dude by the scruff of the neck! Wouldn't I make it pleasant for him! I guess yes!"

"It's Captain Speer who is to blame," said Dick. "I'll sue him for damages if ever I set foot on shore again, or my name ain't Dick Wright."

"Breakfast—breakfast! Come to breakfast!" called Ella from the door.

So Dick went in, and was amazed at the dainty meal which Ella had managed to concoct out of the supplies he had laid in.

Mrs. McIntosh seemed to be over the worst of her fright, but she asked Dick so many questions that he was glad to get back to Andy.

As there seemed no prospect of any change in their situation, it was decided that Andy should lie down in one of the bunks and sleep for two hours, Dick taking his turn at the end of that time.

Dick declared afterward that they were the shortest two hours he ever spent, for Ella remained with him most of the time, chatting about business prospects, telling anecdotes of her father and her life in St. Paul—talking of anything and

everything but the danger they were in, to which she never alluded even once.

When the time was up, it was Ella who made Dick wake Andy and take his sleep; and Dick knew afterward that he got four hours against Andy's two, because Andy had no watch and Ella took care to have hers wrong.

So the day wore on, and darkness began to settle down upon them. Hours had passed since they went shooting out of the Oklawaha—hours which had brought no change.

Dinner was not served, but Ella's supper was far superior to her breakfast, and Mrs. Mac—whose clothes were now thoroughly dry—was positively jolly, and declared that she was no longer a bit afraid.

"Oh, I dare say we'll fetch up somewheres," she said, as Dick was finishing off the dish of bacon and eggs. "Probably the fog will clear off before morning, and we are almost sure to meet some lake steamer, which will take us in tow."

Was Mrs. Mac a prophet?

Oddly enough at that very moment Andy shouted "steamer ahoy!"

They all ran out on the raft and tried to penetrate the gloom, but could see nothing.

Still they could distinctly hear the grinding of the screw of some big lake boat close to them.

Dick shouted himself hoarse, but all to no purpose.

They got in the swash of the steamer, however, and the raft tossed about in such lively style that Mrs. Mac was taken seasick and made very uncomfortable for a few moments, but that was all it amounted to, for after a little the sound of the propeller could no longer be heard.

At least they thought there was nothing more coming, but they were mistaken, for after a few moments, Andy, who was still on the lookout, called out again:

"Something ahead!"

"A schooner!" cried Dick, as a light gleamed through the fog showing them a low black mass down close to the water's edge.

"It's certainly a vessel of some kind," said Ella. "It must be close to us, too. Seems to me I can see one of the masts."

"Ahoy there! Ahoy!" shouted Dick.

There was no answer.

Andy raised his voice, too, and when Andy did his best shouting he might have been heard half a mile away.

But no response came from the schooner, which could now be distinctly seen, and this made Dick think that the fog must be lifting.

"She's drifting," he cried, "and she'll be up against us in no time."

"What can we do?" asked Ella.

"Nothing; she won't do us any harm—let her come!"

So they stood and watched, but Dick made a line fast and prepared for action.

"I don't believe there's anybody on board," he said, "if there was we'd had an answer—yet there's the light."

This was a puzzle, but the question was soon settled, for within five minutes the whole outline of a big lake schooner could be seen.

She was moving slowly but steadily toward the raft.

A few moments more and she came against it.

Dick scrambled aboard and made his line fast.

He could see no one on the deck of the schooner, and when he called down into the cabin no one answered.

Yet the stern and bow lights were burning.

"Here's a prize!" shouted Dick. "Here's salvage for somebody! Throw me another line, Andy, and I'll make her bow fast!"

CHAPTER X.

DICK'S BIG FIND.

"Well, Cousin Dick, you look as though you had found a treasure!" called Ella from the raft as Dick came to the schooner's rail.

"I've found a prize—that's what!" called Dick, his big round face all aglow with excitement. "There ain't a soul on board this schooner, Ella."

"Just what I thought."

"She has evidently been abandoned."

"Why, do you suppose?"

"Probably during the storm. See how low she sets in the water. I've no doubt we shall find that she is leaking badly when we try the pumps. What's her name, Andy, can you read it on her stern?"

"She's the J. T. Pearson of Port Arthur," called Andy, going back to have a look.

"Lazarus Wolfstein's schooner, by gracious! I've seen her in Black Bay many a time. Here's salvage for us, old man."

"Don't I come in for my share?" asked Ella.

"Most assuredly. The cook is one of the crew," laughed Dick.

"How about the dish washer?" called Mrs. Mac, who was busy cleaning away after the morning meal.

"Right in it, too," answered Dick. "We are all in it, and on equal terms. But seriously this is a very important matter. The schooner is loaded with spruce scantling, and is worth a lot of money. The law is very strict in these matters; we've found this schooner on the high seas, and——"

"I should say it was the high lake," interrupted Ella. "Excuse my joke, but is there any difference?"

"Not a bit. She's our prize, and anyway she's worth a lot to us for another reason."

"Which is——"

"That she'll take us to Duluth. We'll hoist the sails and be ready for the wind when it rises and clears away this fog."

"If she don't sink and carry us to the bottom with her, Dick."

"We'll take our chances on that," replied Dick, lightly. "There's a compass here, and with that and a good breeze, I'll show you what we can do. Come, Andy! Tumble up and lend me a hand!"

"Ain't I coming, too?" called Ella.

"Somebody's got to stay and look after the raft; if the second mate don't, we shall have to trust to the dishwater."

"Who won't stay alone!" cried Mrs. Mac.

"Well, I'm the cook, but I'll act as second mate," said Ella. "Noble captain, your orders shall be obeyed."

Now this is the way to work in times of emergency.

If everybody pulls together almost any difficulty can be surmounted.

There was no jealousy, no pulling and hauling among Dick's little crew.

He and Andy worked together as brothers ought to do, but often don't.

The result was they soon knew everything there was to know about the schooner.

That the Pearson had strained her timbers in the storm and was leaking terribly there could be no doubt.

The hold was half full of water, and to hope to keep it down by aid of the pumps was to hope for the impossible.

"She's a goner," said Andy. "Tain't safe to tie to her. She's bonud to sink."

But Dick knew better.

"There you are wrong," he said. "She'll keep afloat a month without a hand being touched to the pumps."

"I'll be blest if I see how you figure that out, Dick."

"Why, Andy, it's plain enough. She's found her level. The timber in the lower hold is all water-logged and she can't sink any lower than she is at present."

"Then why was she deserted?"

"Probably the crew got scared at the rush of water which they couldn't control, and so took to the boats. I've read of wrecked timber ships keeping afloat for months and months. And it's just the same in this case. She'll move slow, but she'll never sink, and I shan't hesitate to tie to her and use the sails if the wind will only rise and blow this infernal fog away."

Dick's wish was granted inside of half an hour.

A strong northwest breeze sprang up, and within a few moments of the time when Andy first called attention to it, the sun shone forth and the fog bank went rolling away up the lake.

Dick gave a joyous shout and called to Andy to come and help him with the sails.

The big sheets were easily raised, as everything was in perfect order.

Dick felt as proud as a peacock when he saw them fill and watched the straining ropes which attached the schooner to the raft.

"That's business!" he cried. "Take the wheel, Andy, head her south—sou'west!"

"Of course you knew where we are," said Andy, as he hurried to obey.

"It would be a pity if I didn't, and you, too. We've been down the lake times enough."

"We are off Two Harbors, as I make it."

"Right. If this breeze holds as it is now, I see no reason why we shouldn't be in Duluth to-morrow morning. I think I'll get the ladies aboard here and let them occupy the cabin, which will be ever so much more comfortable for them than that wretched hut on the raft. There ain't a particle of danger as far as I can see."

When Dick proposed the plan to Ella, she fell in with it at once.

So he helped his cousin and Mrs. McIntosh on deck, and as everything seemed to be going smoothly, escorted them down into the snug little cabin.

Ella was in raptures.

"Why, we can be as comfortable here as we could be in our own house," she declared. "Mrs. Mac, ain't it lovely?"

"It will be lovely if the schooner happens to sink and take us with it," laughed Mrs. Mac.

"Not a bit of danger!" cried Dick. "See, here's two state-rooms, one for each, and here is the storeroom opening off, filled with all kinds of provisions. There's just the nicest little galley on deck that you ever laid eyes on; if you want to write letters, here is the captain's desk, and I have no doubt everything inside in the way of pens, ink and paper, that you need."

"Open it and see," said Ella. "Whoever used it last left the key in the lock, so there can't be any objection to our having a look."

Dick could see none, so he turned the key and opened the desk.

The first object his eyes rested upon was a big, fat wallet fastened with a rubber band.

"Well, well! Look here!" cried Ella. "Here's a pocket-book full of money!"

"Papers, most likely," said Dick, as he seized and opened it.

Ella gave a little scream of delight as a great number of greenbacks came tumbling out.

"Who says paper?" she cried. "Count it, Dick."

Of course Dick was excited. Who would not have been under the circumstances?

His excitement was not lessened when he found that the contents of the wallet figured up over ten thousand dollars.

"There! What did I tell you!" exclaimed Ella. "Dick, your lucky star has come up to stay. Who's sorry now that the raft went over the falls?"

CHAPTER XI.

"THE LUCK OF A LIFETIME," SAYS ANDY, WHEN THE BIG RAFT IS SOLD.

Not Dick, that was certain.

He had no exception to take to Ella's remark.

Even, before he found the pocketbook Dick Wright arrived at the conclusion that the hour in which the big lumber raft went over the falls of the Oklawaha was the luckiest hour of his life.

Andy flung up his hat when Dick told him about the money.

Already he saw his share of the find in his pocket, and began to talk about what he would do with it, when Dick "called him down" by remarking:

"Of course it don't belong to us, Andy. More than likely it's old Wolfstein's. I shall give it up with the steamer at Duluth."

"Now I tell you what, Dick! I wouldn't do anything of the sort," said Ella.

"What would you do?" asked Dick. "Surely, Ella, you wouldn't advise me to——"

"To keep what don't belong to you? Certainly not. Who's your lawyer?"

"Squire Pine, of Black Bay."

"You can trust him?"

"With a million if I had it."

"Then give him the money and let him advertise for the owner. Don't you say a word about it when we get to Duluth."

This advice Dick determined to follow, and, of course, Andy, when he came to have the matter explained to him in its proper light, had no objections to make.

So Dick stowed the big wallet away in his pocket, and nothing more was said about it, and the rest of the day was devoted strictly to business.

Dick and Andy stuck to their work, and everything went as smoothly as possible, the schooner and the raft making good headway.

By sundown they had advanced so far that Dick declared that they would be in Duluth before morning if the wind only held, and there was no sign of its dying out.

Just after nightfall a lake steamer hove in sight, and a little later came alongside of them.

The passengers crowded against the starboard rail, and everyone watched them with the deepest interest until the steamer was within hailing distance.

"Ahoy there! What's the matter?" shouted the mate, when they were near enough to make themselves heard.

"Nothing!" called Dick.

"Don't you want any help?"

"No!"

"What schooner is that?"

"The J. T. Pearson of Port Arthur."

"You're away below your water line!"

"I know it. We're all right."

"Where's the crew? Where's Captain Bunce?"

"Don't know. We found the schooner deserted, and we are taking her to Duluth."

"Do you want a tow?"

"No! And what's more we won't have it. I tell you we're all right, and don't propose to share salvage with anybody else."

"That boy's head is level," remarked the captain of the lake

steamer. "He'll be in Duluth before morning, and he'd be a big fool to take a line from us."

And the captain's prediction was verified.

Long before sunrise the J. T. Pearson came up alongside the lumber docks and Dick and Andy dropped anchor.

They had done a big thing, but on one other thing they were determined and that was not to spoil it by talking too much or making any rash move.

Ella and Mrs. McIntosh were asleep at the time, and did not even know that they had made port.

The boys did not disturb them, but quietly sat down and waited for morning to dawn.

They did not have to wait long after sunrise for visitors, however.

They were soon seen, and men came down on the pier to have a look at the big raft.

As nearly everyone knew the Pearson, the first thought was that the whole affair belonged to Wolfstein & Co.

But when the harbor master arrived, which was just as Ella called breakfast, he quickly undeceived them.

"This is the raft that got away at Black Bay, isn't it?" he shouted.

"It is," replied Dick, quietly.

"Did you bring her down the lake?"

"You see her here. I haven't left her since she went over the falls."

"Great Scott! you're a smart one!" cried the harbor master, leaping down upon the raft; "but where did you get the Pearson? Heard she was lost up the lake in the storm. Captain Bunce fell overboard and was drowned, and the crew took to the boats and made for Port Arthur after a hard tussle, and now here you bring the schooner in safe and sound."

"That's right," said Dick. "We found her up the lake, and we weren't going to leave her there. When does the next train go to St. Paul?"

"Half-past eight. But what do you want to go to St. Paul for? What's the matter with selling your lumber here? Mebbe you don't know there's a big boom on the Chicago market. There came near being a panic on the Exchange yesterday; prices are sky high."

Dick's spirits flew sky high at the news.

He had no idea of going to St. Paul, but he had promised Ella and Mrs. McIntosh that they should go by the first train.

So Andy went ashore and called a carriage, taking the ladies to the station, for Dick, much as he would have liked the pleasure of escorting Ella, would not consent to leave the raft.

"Good-by, Dick! You shall hear from father very soon," said Ella, as she bade her cousin farewell. "Don't you be a bit afraid. He'll see you through."

"I ain't worrying, Ella," replied Dick, blushing.

"No, I don't think you are," laughed Ella. "You'll get along without help—that's my opinion. Anyhow I shall never forget what you have done for me, and I hope you sell the raft for double what you expect—so there."

When Andy came back and started down the wharf he was really quite alarmed at the crowd.

Men were jostling each other, shouting and calling out to Dick, who stood on the raft in the midst of twenty or more business men.

"Here, you can't go down there! No one else can go aboard until some of those fellows come off," said the wharfinger, putting himself in Andy's way.

"But I belong on board!" cried Andy. "What's the matter anyhow?"

"Matter is they want the raft."

"For what?"

"For money, stupid. This happens to be just the kind of stuff they are after. Where are your eyes? Don't you see? Every man in the lumber trade is down there."

"I'll give you so much! I'll give you so much!" this one and that one shouted, as they crowded about Dick, shaking their fingers in his face.

"Gentlemen!" called out Dick. "It's no use for you to crowd me. I don't sell till Mr. Totten gets here. He's the man I'm consigned to, and whatever he says goes!"

Just then a man came hurrying down the wharf and jumped aboard the raft uninterfered with, Andy taking the opportunity to follow.

"My name is Totten!" he exclaimed. "You're Dick Wright. I suppose? I ought to have been here before."

"Time enough," said Dick, quietly. "Glad to see you, Mr. Totten. Here's your raft. Do the best you can."

"Great goodness, ain't I glad to see you?" cried Totten. "Heard you were lost on the lake."

"Not a bit of it, but I shall be lost if you don't rescue me from these fellows here."

"Gentlemen," cried Totten, "we sell on the Exchange. You can't bulldoze this boy while I am around."

Then Mr. Totten went away, and the crowd followed him.

It was Dick's old luck again.

Ella's wish was fully realized.

The big raft sold for more than double the sum Dick had anticipated, but Mr. Wolfstein having no representative on hand to look after the Pearson and her cargo missed his chance, for before the board closed the market broke and prices dropped out of sight.

"By thunder, Dick, we were just in time," remarked Andy when they read the news at the hotel that afternoon, for the extras were being shouted by the newsboys through the streets.

Dick smiled.

"I'm satisfied, Andy."

"Satisfied! I should think you might be."

"Well, there's no use in getting the big head over it. I can meet all my engagements and there'll be a surplus left for working capital. Let's go back to Black Bay and saw up some logs."

"It's the luck of a lifetime!" said Andy.

And so it was.

CHAPTER XII.

LOST IN THE BLIZZARD.

The remaining weeks of the fall passed quietly, for the lumber market did not boom again.

Dick managed to keep the mill running with a reduced force, sawing up all the odds and ends of stock which Mr. Van Tassell had allowed to accumulate.

For this Black Bay blessed him. The usual custom was to shut down after the big raft left in the fall, and until the cutting season began the lumbermen always had a hard time of it, but Dick kept running up to within a week of their departure for the great North Woods.

During this time he used every spare moment to study into the business, and he felt that he had mastered the secret of the recent flurry, and knew just what kind of timber would be likely to be in demand in the spring.

Nothing more was heard of Wolfstein's suit, but Squire Pine managed Dick's affairs so skillfully that a handsome salvage was paid on the cargo of the Pearson.

This Dick divided into four parts. Andy got his share, and Ella and Mrs. McIntosh theirs.

The answer to Dick's letter, inclosing the check, was the only

word he received from either his uncle or cousin, in spite of Ella's promise that her father would write.

Nor did anyone write now. It was just a telegram, reading as follows:

"Check received. Ella sends thanks. Bust ahead. You're doing well.
C. Goldwin."

"Strange man," thought Dick. "He evidently is determined to make me fight my own battles—probably it is just as well."

As for the money found in the wallet, that was still in Squire Pine's possession. Several had claimed it as heirs to Captain Bunce, who was a bachelor, but as they could offer no other proof of the captain's death than the statement of his crew that he was washed overboard on the night of the storm, Squire Pine refused to deliver up the money until ordered by the courts.

So this matter remained unsettled at the time Dick and Andy started for Section 38 with their big gang of lumbermen.

The journey was made partly by sleigh and partly on snowshoes.

Dick and Andy had been in the camp the previous season, and knew just what to expect.

It was really wonderful how well Dick managed and how completely he had won the affections of his men.

The fact that they were working for a mere boy never seemed to enter their heads.

It was "the boss" says this, and "the boss" says that, and Dick's orders were never disputed.

Day after day he and Andy worked right in the gang, and were soon able to swing an ax with the best of them.

One afternoon, when they had about finished the lot of spruce timber on which operations had been begun, Dick proposed to Andy to go over to Fox lake, a distance of about five miles, to inspect a section of standing pine which he knew Mr. Van Tassell intended to cut that season.

"Don't you do it, boss," said Dan Cribbs, an old time wood cutter, who happened to overhear the proposal. "It's going to snow, and if you should happen to miss your way it might be a bad job for you. Wait till the storm has passed."

But Dick only laughed.

"If I begin by being afraid of the first snowstorm, where'll I wind up?" he said. "Keep things humming, Dan, and we'll be back before supper time—never you fear."

So the boys started with their rifles and snowshoes slung over their backs, for the crust was hard now and walking through the woods was first rate.

They made splendid time up to the timber, bagging a round dozen partridges on the way, but within twenty minutes after they started to return the snow began to fall.

"There!" cried Andy. "Dan Gibbs was right after all! Now what are we going to do?"

"Going back to camp," replied Dick. "Don't be a bit disturbed."

Perhaps there was nothing to be disturbed about then, but it was not so a little later.

The wind rose to a perfect gale, and the snow came down so thick and fast that all landmarks were speedily obliterated.

With the assistance of their snowshoes the boys toiled on bravely, but matters grew worse and worse, and to add to their troubles darkness came creeping upon them.

"Dick," said Andy, at last, after they had toiled on for some time in silence, "this is a regular blizzard, and that ain't the worst of it—we're lost!"

"I know it," answered Dick, hollowly. "I've known it these twenty minutes."

"What's to be done?"

"We've got to keep on going—we're goners if we don't."

"But we're making no headway. It's my belief that we are going round and round in a circle."

"If we stop we'll freeze."

"Any idea where we are?"

"Not the faintest, but I don't take to your circle theory. See that open space on ahead? I'll take my affidavit we've never been there before."

"It's nothing. You can't tell."

"Yes, it is—it's a small clearing. The timber has been cut out here," persisted Dick, pushing ahead. "Come on! Come on! Like enough we'll find one of Van Tassell's camps here."

Andy pressed forward, but he had not taken a dozen steps when Dick suddenly gave a sharp cry and vanished, dropping down into the snow out of sight.

"Dick! Dick!" shouted Andy.

A muffled shout came in answer, and at the same instant a hideous yell rang out through the forest—a cry which sent a thrill of horror to Andy's heart.

Close upon the cry came a still more appalling sound.

A fearful explosion!

It almost threw Andy off his feet.

Then a vast burst of flame seemed to light up the forest, and the cry was heard again.

It was a laugh—a wild—mad laugh—the laugh of a demon echoing and re-echoing through the forest, now all ablaze with that unearthly light.

"Dick! Dick! Speak to me, Dick!" shouted Andy.

But no answer came.

The cry had been succeeded by silence most profound.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAS IT A DREAM?

Andy Benson was destined to pass through some very exciting experiences that night of the big blizzard.

It was a good thing, therefore, that he was the sort of fellow who usually kept his head in an emergency.

The flames were now shooting up in a dozen directions, the light reflecting upon the snow in a curious ghastly way.

As Andy stood there staring at it a strange figure sprang across the opening, yelling wildly.

It looked half man and half beast, for it ran half on all fours, throwing itself forward until its hands touched the snow at each step.

To Andy's excited imagination it looked a veritable nightmare—a distorted vision. He could only see a mass of thick fur with long arms and legs projecting; but there were mittens on the hands and snowshoes on the feet, so man it must have been.

Andy held his breath until the strange figure vanished, and the discordant cry died away.

Now, all that we have described was the work of but a moment, and Andy had scarcely heard the last of the cry when a muffled shout from under the snow at his feet told him that Dick Wright still lived.

"Andy, Andy, Andy!" Dick's voice was heard calling.

Thanks to the fire, it was as light as day now.

Andy could see the snow flying right and left, as he eagerly answered the shout.

"Dick! Where are you?"

"Why, in a hole, Andy! Right here at your feet, old man; an infernal bear trap! By thunder, I thought for a moment I was smothered! What's going on up there?"

"Blest if I'll ever tell you, Dick, and I ain't going to try till I get you out."

He had caught sight of Dick by this time, for the young

lumberman was thrashing away the snow with his hands and feet, trampling it down under him until he had worked his way to the edge of the pit where Andy was able to lend him a hand and help him out.

Dick shook himself like a big dog.

"By gracious, Andy, that was a tough experience! I thought for a minute I was a goner; what was all that yelling about? Are the woods on fire? What does it all mean, anyhow?"

But Andy's information only added to the mystery.

It looked now as if the whole forest was in a blaze before them.

The boys pushed on as rapidly as possible, giving the bear-trap a wide berth, you may be very sure.

In a moment they came out into a broad clearing where several log huts stood.

One of these had evidently been blown up. The ruins were scattered about over the snow and blazing fiercely.

The boys stood looking at the fire for several minutes without speaking; not a soul was visible. Whatever was the explanation of the strange figure seen by Andy, it was quite evident that they now had the place all to themselves.

"This is Van Tassell's old camp," said Dick at last.

"Never was at the old camp, so I can't say."

"I've been here before. It is certainly the place. That was the storehouse. I expect there were rendrock cartridges there. Van Tassell used them to blow up stumps when he built the road to Fox Lake."

"Which accounts for the fire, but not for the thing I saw, Dick."

"More than likely that was some Indian with a bear skin thrown about him. I don't believe he set the fire on purpose; probably he started a fire in the hut to warm himself and in some way or other the cartridges went off."

Of course, it was easy to imagine explanations of the mystery, but as there was no way of settling it the boys soon gave up thinking about it, and started to look for shelter for themselves, leaving the fire to burn itself out.

It seemed strange to Dick to think that he was the owner of the large hut at the other end of the clearing when they entered it, for he had almost forgotten its existence.

It was just the place for them in the present emergency, however.

Dick struck a match and was rejoiced to see that the hut was fully furnished in lumberman style.

There was the stove and table and chairs, the shelves with dishes and the pots and the pans, there was the ladder leading up to the loft overhead, where Dick knew there were bunks and plenty of warm bedding.

In short, it was just the place to tie up in a blizzard, so Dick lighted a lantern which hung suspended from the floor beam overhead, and Andy shut the door.

"Here's a bully nest for a stormy night!" he cried. "Dick, we're in luck. We can build a fire and stop here till morning; no doubt the storm will be over by that time."

They soon had a roaring fire going in the big stove. Dick found some canned meats and hard bread in the closet, and in a little while they had supper on the table—such as it was.

The storm was still raging when they had finished the meal, and as they were both pretty well tired out, Dick proposed that they turn in upstairs in the loft, a proposition which Andy warmly seconded.

Before starting up the ladder the boys took one last look outside.

The fire had burned itself out now, and they could see nothing but the whirling snowflakes.

"By gracious, that fellow stands a fair chance of passing in his checks, whoever he was," remarked Andy. "Even an Indian couldn't hold out in the woods a night like this."

"And what about us?" laughed Dick. "Who says I ain't thankful we managed to make this hut? Come, let's us get upstairs to bed."

There were six bunks in the loft, and plenty of blankets.

Wrapping the warm woolen covers around them, the boys tumbled into their bunks, and were soon fast asleep.

For some hours Dick never knew a thing, and when he finally woke up it was still dark.

Dick started up suddenly. Startling words, spoken in a loud voice, ringing in his ears.

"I tell you there's only one way to do it, and that's to kill old man Goldwin. I obeyed orders, and don't you forget it—he's got to die!"

Then, as Dick strained his ears to listen, all was profoundly silent, save for the howling of the blizzard outside the hut.

Had the words actually been spoken, or was it all a dream?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLOT OVERHEARD.

The dream theory did for a minute.

Dick was just about to turn over and go to sleep again, when the voice was heard once more.

"Strange who could have been here, ain't it?"

"Some of that little upstart's men probably. This is one of his camps, you know."

"Is it really?"

"Yes. The Boy Lumber King, they are calling him. Infernal little snob!"

"They say he made a big thing out of that raft, Silas."

"Big thing! I guess he did. Who'd ever have supposed it? When we cut them ropes, Abe, I made sure she'd go to pieces on the falls. Gee whiz! That was an exciting time, wasn't it?"

"Well, I guess yes!"

"When I found Goldwin's gal was on board I felt scared. Thought mebbe the boss would object."

"But he didn't."

"Not he! You'd orter seed the look what came over his face. 'I wish Goldwin and the gal were both dead!' he hissed out betwixt them snaggle teeth of his. 'She keeps the old man alive and there won't be no peace for me till he's under the sod.'"

"Well, I reckon he's right. Strange what luck that cub of a boy has though. Why wasn't he killed that night we put him on the saw table?"

"You know."

"But why—why? If the other one had been a minute later he'd have been sawed in half. Just the same with the raft. Every other raft what ever went over them falls went to pieces, but his'n didn't. He not only got it safe over the falls, but safe to Duluth, and what's more had to run into the danged old Pearson and get salvage on her, and as if that wasn't enough he had to find Bunce's hoard, which you and me have looked for many a day. I tell you it's just bull-headed luck. Here, give us more of the tobacco. Strange the little darling don't come."

Can anybody doubt that Dick's eyes grew big as he listened to all this?

He scarcely dared to draw his breath as he slipped out of the bunk, unwound his blanket, and crept toward the trap door.

But when he looked down he could only make out two dark figures crouching over the fire, for the lantern was out, and the intruders unaware of its existence, no doubt, were sitting in the dark.

"They must be captured if I die for it," thought Dick. "What a pair of scoundrels! But who is the boss they talk about? Who is putting up for all this?"

Dick was just about to creep over to Andy's bunk and waken

him when one of the men opened the stove door and threw in a log of wood with considerable noise.

Dick tried to get sight of his face then, but failed, and the man resuming his seat the conversation began again.

"Say, Silas, we better not wait here much longer," remarked Abe. "The storm is about over, and the little darling don't seem to come. If we are going to do old Goldwin to-night we'd better be moving. Course I'd rather have the gang with me, but if they positively hain't a-coming we've got to do it alone."

"That's right. How far do you call it to Goldwin's camp?"

"Why, it's at the head of Budd's Lake—not more'n two miles."

"Then his claim joins onto his nephew's?"

"Yes."

"Strange the old man should come up when he can't put his foot to the ground."

"Oh, he's clear grit, an' so's the gal. You see this is our chance. Every man of his gang is in the woods to-night, and there hain't nobody in the house but them two, and old Ned Furness, who has one foot into the grave."

"Hain't the McIntosh woman there?"

"No; she refused to come up into the woods, and that's where her head was level."

"Think you can find your way back?"

"Why, cert. The tracks is all there, for there hain't no snow of any consequence fallen since. Oh, I can manage that part of it all right, never you fear."

"On some accounts it would be better we were alone. Too many witnesses hain't just the thing at a time like this."

"You bet your life they hain't, and there won't be none; trust me to manage that. Still the little darling wants to marry the gal, and has promised to pay me well, so you see—gee whiz! What was that?"

It was only Andy tumbling out of the bunk.

"Confound it! So much for moving about in the dark," he growled as he picked himself up from the floor upon which he had fallen heavily. "You calling me, Dick? What's the matter?"

"Hush! Hush! For Heaven sake be quiet, Andy!" gasped Dick. "Look out! They are coming! Of, if we hadn't left our guns downstairs!"

Andy had knocked Dick's fine plans for capturing the two scoundrels all in the head.

Up the ladder they came hurrying.

Andy, half dazed, and hampered by the big blanket which was wound around him, was no earthly use in the fight which followed.

Dick struck at the man, but it was dark, and he missed his mark.

All in an instant his legs were seized, and he went sprawling on his back.

"Look out, Sile! I've got him!" cried the man.

He dragged Dick through the trap door, and moving aside just let him drop.

It was a wonder it did not kill the boy.

He struck on his feet, however, and was none the worse for the shock, when he was seized by Silas, who dealt him a cruel blow in the forehead.

Dick dropped like a stone.

Meanwhile, Andy was captured in the act while in the act of unwinding his blanket.

When Dick came to his senses he found himself tied hand and foot, and lying on the floor beside Andy.

The hut was full of men who were laughing and talking, while they ate the meat the boys had left.

"Say, Darlington gave up and went back." Dick heard one

say. "The storm was too much for him, but that needn't interfere with our plans none."

"I won't!" said Silas. "When you fellers get through grubbing we'll start, but first off we must decide about these boys."

"So Mr. Darley Darlington is in it," thought Dick. "I know who the boss is now."

He was thinking of Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein, and yet he could hardly bring himself to believe that any business man could be so base.

But the conversation was going on while Dick lay thinking. "Shall we take 'em with us or shall we kill 'em, Abe?" Silas asked.

"Kill 'em," said Abe, decidedly.

"No, no!" cried several voices. "We ain't out for deliberate murder, but only to break up Goldwin's camp and put the Boy Lumber King where he won't cut no timber this trip."

"Oh, that's it, is it?" laughed Abe. "Well, then I s'pose we shall have to take 'em along, but if they hapen to die on our hands afore we get up to Budd's lake you mustn't blame me."

And Abe broke into an evil laugh which sent a cold chill through Dick's heart.

But it was not his own danger which worried him.

Dick was thinking of Andy, of his uncle, and more than all of Ella's fate.

CHAPTER XV.

THE ATTACK ON THE BLOCK HOUSE.

"Get on the horse there! Lively now! Lively! Here, young feller, you get up behind him. That's the talk! Now then, fellers, we're ready. Let's git!"

Abe and Silas picked up Andy between them, and just lifted him into the saddle behind Dick, for they were big, strong lumbermen, and the boy was a mere feather's weight in their powerful arms.

There were eight horses and as many men, Abe and Silas doubling up to make room for Dick and Andy.

Don't think Dick accepted the situation without protest.

Not a bit of it. He had a lot to say at the start, but Silas soon shut him up, ordering him gruffly to hold his tongue under penalty of being instantly shot, to enforce which threat he flourished a revolver under Dick's nose.

When they started off Abe and Silas were in the rear, Dick and Andy next.

They rode on through the snow single file, winding in and out among the trees, the leader of the company carefully watching the "blazes" or cuts in the bark which had been made to show them their way.

After they had been about a quarter of an hour on the road Silas called out sneeringly to Dick:

"Hello there! What's the matter? Are you asleep?"

"Wide awake," replied Dick, quietly.

"And laying for your chance, I suppose. Ha, ha! So, so, my bold boy lumber king, your race is pretty near run! Say, how much of our confab did you hear before I jumped on you?"

"Enough."

"Enough to let you know that it was me and my partner what sent your big raft over the falls?"

"Yes."

"Good enough! I wanted you to know that! Say, what do you think of——"

The sentence was never completed.

Suddenly that same awful yell rang out through the forest, sounding like the last dying shriek of some lost soul.

"Holy sailor! What was that?" gasped Silas, suddenly reining in, as, indeed, most of the others did.

Before anybody had time to utter a word the cry came again, and all in the same instant two shots were fired.

The horse which Abe and Silas rode reared, and with a wild

snort fell over on his side, throwing his riders in the snow, and pinning them down as he lay desperately struggling for life.

Silas roared, and Abe yelled for help.

Dick's horse bolted the instant the shot was fired, and in that bolt Dick saw his chance.

"Spur him up, Andy! Spur him up!" he whispered. "It's your friend the wild man again. If we can't get away now we never can! We'll make a try for it or bust!"

Dick gave the horse free rein, and Andy dug his heels into the poor animal's flanks.

Again and again the awful cry rang out, and other shots were fired.

The utmost confusion followed.

They could hear the men shouting and calling to one another; whether they were doing part of the firing or not the boys could not tell, for they urged the horse on at a breakneck pace among the trees.

"Look back! See if we are being followed, Andy!" cried Dick. "We can't keep this up long."

"Can't see anyone."

"Good enough! Give him another dig!"

"They are coming now."

"Stop there! Stop!" yelled a loud voice. "We'll shoot you on sight if you don't pull in that horse!"

"Let 'em catch us first," said Dick. "They can have the horse, but they won't get us. Pity if we can't give 'em a slip in the dark."

A slip of another kind came even as Dick spoke.

Suddenly they came out of the forest, and down went the horse up to his neck in a snow bank.

Sudden as was the shock, the boys held on bravely, and managed to keep the saddle.

"Good horse—good horse!" cried Dick, patting the poor brute on the neck and trying to soothe him.

For a moment there was a fierce struggle, and then the horse broke out of the drift and went rushing out upon a broad level space where the snow was not more than two feet deep.

"It's Budd's Lake!" cried Dick. "Oh, Andy, if we could only put it through to Mr. Goldwin's block house in time!"

Hastily Dick told what he had overheard, for Andy was as yet in the dark as to the details of the plot.

"We must!" Andy cried. "Your uncle and Ella there alone! Think of it, Dick."

"Don't want to think of it—drives me crazy! Are they coming?"

"I don't hear them now."

"Something must have turned them off. Strange, too, for our tracks are a dead give away. Oh, if we could only make this beast go faster."

"We'll kill him if we do. He's making the best time he can now. Do you know the way, Dick?"

"Can't miss it; all we've got to do is to go right up to the head of the lake!"

"How far?"

"Not more than three miles, but I fancy there's a shorter cut, or those scoundrels would have taken this way themselves."

"We can only do our best. Goodness, Dick! I can hardly believe that they would dare."

"You ought to have heard them—that's all I've got to say. I tell you they are out for business. Look, there's the light away ahead."

Far in the distance a light could be faintly distinguished.

Dick knew enough of the region to feel sure that it could not be anywhere else than in the big two-story, log dwelling, known as the block house, at his uncle's logging camp.

They pushed bravely on, but it was hard to get the horse out of a walk.

At last they came in sight of the block house. It was surrounded by a high palisade, for it had been built some years before when the Indians still troubled the loggers at times.

"Look! There they come!" cried Andy, suddenly.

"Sure enough!" said Dick, catching sight of a number of mounted men wending their way along the shore of the lake.

"Will they head us off?"

"I hardly think it, but there's no use trying to make this horse go any faster."

They pushed on, narrowing the distance every instant until at last Dick pulled in at the gate of the palisade with the lumbermen still a hundred yards away.

"They see us!" cried Andy.

Dick leaped from the saddle and began thundering on the gate. But before Andy could follow his example a shot came flying, instantly followed by another and another.

Andy escaped, but the poor horse which had carried them so bravely over the lake fell dead, throwing the boy into the snow.

"Are you hurt?" asked Dick, springing to his assistance.

"Not a bit. What's to be done? Oh, if they would only answer!"

"Someone coming now," said Dick, for a noise was heard behind the gate, which flew open.

There stood Ella with a lantern.

"Dick!" she exclaimed, starting back. "Oh, Dick! What lucky star guided you here?"

"Quick, Ella! Stand aside and let us in! Don't you see?"

Dick pointed to the advancing lumbermen excitedly.

"Yes, yes! I know! We were warned! I've been watching!" gasped Ella, springing back.

The instant she moved another shot was fired.

"Hold on there! Hold on! Don't you shut that gate if you value your lives!" the voice of Silas yelled.

The boys were already inside, and Dick slammed the gate, while Andy put the big bar which secured it in place and Ella turned the key in the lock.

"Dick, they mean to kill father!" she breathed. "Oh, what shall we do?"

"Keep cool, Ella! We are here to fight till the last! Hear the scoundrels! Just hear them!"

Ella must have been deaf not to have heard them, for the men had already reached the palisade, and were thundering on the gate.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK ON THE BLOCK HOUSE.

When Ella led the boys inside the block house, Dick found his Uncle Goldwin sitting in a big invalid's chair, near the open hearth, where a crackling fire of green woods blazed and fluttered.

"Cousin Dick and Mr. Andy Benson, father," said Ella quietly—she knew just how to take the crotchety old lumberman who always wanted to do all the talking himself.

"Hello, Dick, my boy!" cried Mr. Goldwin, extending his hand and shaking Dick's heartily. "Benson, how are you? So they are after me, are they? You've come to warn me, I suppose! Confound that scoundrel. I hear his thugs banging away to-night, Ella, and leaving me here alone with you! Someone will have to sweat for this! Oh, if I was only what I used to be I'd soon show that hook-nosed villain that his hand is as clear as day in all this! I—I—I——"

Right here Mr. Goldwin lost his wind and just squeaked like a pair of bellows all squeezed out, which was perhaps just as well, for it gave Ella a chance to get in a word, and beg that Dick be allowed to speak.

"That's right. Go ahead, Dick, and tell your story. Confound 'em! I wish—hold on! I'll quit! Just look out of the upper window, Ella, and tell me what they are doing now, and

then I'll be good and hold my tongue until Dick has said his say."

"They are all standing around the gate," reported Ella, whither she had hurried at her father's request, for the window referred to was at the top of the block house, and from it one could look over the palisade.

"Good enough!" said Mr. Goldwin. "They are up a stump, and don't know what to do—go on, Dick."

The old lumberman listened patiently to all Dick had to say, and never broke in once.

"Good boy!" he exclaimed, when Dick had told all. "I shan't forget this. Of course, you know who hired these scoundrels?"

"I can't help suspecting Mr. Wolfstein, sir, from what I overheard."

"And your suspicions are quite correct. Wolfstein is my deadly enemy. I struck him in the face with my stick on the floor of the Lumber Exchange at St. Paul last spring, and he has never forgiven me for it. He has vowed to ruin me and to ruin you, for he knows I want you to succeed. He hired my chief clerk away from me—you know Darley Darlington, a little scoundrel, by the way—and he has tried to injure me in a thousand ways. Up here in the woods there is no law, no protection. I was warned of this. My men have all been bought, but a new gang is coming to-morrow, and a detective who will stand by me until—Ella, I smell smoke! Gracious! while we are talking here they've set the palisade afire! Run, Dick! Run and see! Oh, if I only had my legs! If I only had my legs!"

Now, if Mr. Goldwin was lacking in the matter of legs, he certainly had not lost the use of his tongue, for he kept right on talking while Dick and Andy ran upstairs.

"By gracious, it's just as he says!" exclaimed Andy. "While we've been talking those fiends have been at work."

A light smoke was rising above the palisade.

The men could not all be seen, nor could the fire, which was too close to the fence, but Abe and Silas and one or two others were in view. They were dragging brushwood to the palisade.

Dick caught his breath.

"There ain't no doubt of it!" gasped Andy. "What in the world are we to do with your uncle a night like this? Even if we could get him out he would perish in the storm."

"Dick! Dick! What in thunder keeps you so long?" shouted Mr. Goodwin from the room below.

Dick bounded downstairs.

"Well, well!" demanded the paralytic in his impatient way.

"They are building a fire against the fence, uncle!" gasped Dick. "Shall we—"

"Shoot them—no! Not at all, if that's what you mean! I'm no murderer. There must be no shooting except as a last resort."

"But in self-defense, uncle! Are we to stay here and be burned like rats in a trap? Think of Ella—think of yourself."

"Plague take it, boy, what else am I thinking about? Here, take this revolver. Listen to me! Get down into the cellar! There, on the left hand, you'll find a door. Open it—here's the key! Leads to my powder house by an underground passage. Powder house opens on the river; it's built right against the side of the bluff."

"I follow you, sir. I'll do just as you say."

"Do it, then! Get to the powder house and bring up four reud rock cartridges, regular stump blowers they are. You shall light one with a short fuse, and pitch it out the window—not at them, mind, but off to one side—far enough away so that it won't do any harm. If the snow don't put out the fuse, the explosion will scatter them; if it don't, why then we'll set off the next inside the palisade, and blow the fence and those fellows on the other side of it to blazes—that will be in self-defense."

Did Mr. Goldwin mean this for a ghastly pun?

Dick rather thought so as he dashed away, and in spite of the seriousness of the situation he could not help laughing at the quaint originality of the old man.

"What if it don't work?" said Andy, as they hurried through the short underground passage leading to the powder house. "The snow will surely put out the fuse."

"Not a doubt of it," replied Dick. "Andy, we have only just begun; there's trouble ahead of the worst kind, and—what's that?"

The door leading into the powder house was ahead, and someone was trying to open it from the outside.

Dick's heart was in his mouth.

He drew the revolver which his uncle had given him and waited.

The sounds on the door kept up.

Someone was fumbling at the lock.

"Open it, Andy," whispered Dick. "I can't stand this. I'd rather fight and be done with it."

"Are you mad?" breathed Andy. "Suppose it should be some of those fellows? Who else can it be, in fact?"

"Don't care! I'm going to face the music. We've got to fight 'em, you and I, Andy. This plan of my uncle's is all nonsense. Drive those scoundrels away and put out the fire we must, or Ella will be burnt to death. I'd rather die a dozen deaths than have that poor girl fall into the hands of those men."

"Dick," said Andy, "I'm with you. If you say open the door, open it comes, but for gracious sake, let's wait a minute and be sure we are right before we go ahead."

They crept close to the door and listened.

The fumbling at the lock had ceased now, but hoarse voices could be heard talking outside.

"We've got to get in," Dick overheard. "There's no other way of doing it. Now, then, boys, all together! We'll break the door down!"

Then they threw themselves against the door with terrific force, the panels bending under the strain.

Dick stepped back, cocked his revolver, and waited.

"Hold the lantern so that I can get a good aim, Andy," he whispered. "By gracious, the first man who shows his nose dies!"

CHAPTER XVII.

GETTING READY FOR BUSINESS.

Dick was all ready for business, but when the door flew open he was treated to an agreeable surprise.

It came with the second rush.

"Stand back!" shouted Dick, as half a dozen men, all bundled up in lumberman styie, came tumbling in.

"Look out, Mr. Wright; don't shoot your friends!" cried the foremost, as they all fell back at sight of the revolver.

Andy gave a joyous shout, and Dick sprang forward, seizing the speaker by the hand. For who should it be but old Dan Cribbs, and those behind him were all Dick's men.

Dick explained matters and threw himself in front of the little band, and with Dan Cribbs to guide him was soon on the level ground outside the palisade.

A dense black smoke was now rolling over the block house—they could hear the shouts of the men around by the gate.

"Divide," whispered Dick. "We'll come on them from both sides."

At this time Ella was up in the window looking out. Suddenly she heard a shout, and saw two parties of armed men come dashing around the sides of the palisade. Dick led one, Andy the other. The rifles cracked, and the firebngs rushed by their horses, never stopping to return the shots.

"Don't kill them!" said Dick. "Mr. Goldwin won't have it."

So they fired over their heads, which did just as well, for it sent the villains flying.

To scatter the fire was but the matter of a moment.

Then they threw snow against the palisade, putting out the burning pickets wherever it had caught.

Ella opened the gate, and Dick and Andy, followed by the lumbermen, went in to Mr. Goldwin.

"What's this? Who are these fellows?" cried the old man. "Ah, Dan Cribbs, are you there? Your boys, Dick? By thunder, this is glorious! It's a hundred dollars to every one of you fellows! Don't say a word! It's got to be! Now we'll have breakfast and forget all about this business—if we can."

The last remark was well put in. As though any of them could forget. Certainly Dick could not, and he never left the blockhouse until Mr. Goldwin's new gang arrived, which was toward night, after the storm had cleared away.

With them came a private detective hired by Mr. Goldwin for his protection, and to ferret out the plot which the old lumberman felt sure Lazarus Wolfstein had concocted against him.

But the winter passed away, and Dick never heard of any of the men who attacked the block house being captured.

After about a week Mr. Goldwin and Ella went back to St. Paul. Dick and Andy returned to their own camp that night.

The winter's cut proved a great success for Dick. The logs were hauled to the bank of the river, and everything made ready for the breaking up of the ice in the spring. At last it came. On the night of April 10th it began to rain.

"This will fetch it," said Dan Cribbs. "If the river don't open to-night I'm a ghost. We want to get our logs in ahead of Wolfstein, or he'll jam us sure."

Now, Wolfstein's claim lay five miles further up the river. It was his custom to run his cut down to the first falls of the Oklawaha, where they were turned aside by a boom, and sent into the Malawasha river, at the mouth of which the Jew's principle mill was located.

Of course, every log is branded, and should any of another owner get mixed in with Wolfstein's, he was obliged to give an account and make them good. But this meant a settlement long delayed, and lots of trouble, so it was highly desirable for Dick to get his logs past Wolfstein's boom first, whence they would go over the falls and so on down the Oklawaha to his own mill.

Mr. Goldwin's cut, we may as well mention here, went an entirely different way.

When Dick turned in that night the rain was pouring in torrents.

"You'll call me the minute the ice gives," he said to Dan Cribbs.

So Dick went to bed with his clothes all on, but Andy was not with him for the first time since they came to the camp.

Andy had taken a horse and gone up the river to see what the men at Wolfstein's camp were about.

At half-past two Dick felt his shoulder roughly shaken.

"Get up, boss! Get up!" Dan Cribbs called. "The ice has broken, and Mr. Benson is coming down the road."

Dick sprang out of the bunk and followed Dan out of the hut.

The men with their big log-rollers were gathered at the bank; the river filled with floating ice was rushing madly at their feet. The critical moment had come. With the big cut safely at the mill, Dick felt that his fortune was assured.

Just then Andy came dashing into camp.

"Quick! Lose no time!" he shouted. "The river is clear all the way up to Wolfstein's, and his men are getting ready to float their cut."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FIGHT AT THE FALLS.

"They mean to jam us," continued Andy. "It's all arranged. Wolfstein expects to head us off at the falls and turn all our cut that he possibly can into the Malawasha."

"The scoundrel! Do you mean to say that Wolfstein was up there himself, Andy?"

"No, no! I only heard the men talking about it. Those are his orders, though. I don't see why you should be so surprised, Dick, considering what we know of the man."

"Well, I ain't, of course. By gracious, we must head him off."

"If we can, but a gang of his men are down at the falls already, laying for our logs."

"You hear, Dan?" said Dick, turning to the old lumberman.

"Well, rather. Boss, I tell you what you do—send a dozen men on ahead to fight for you. We'll see that the boom ain't shut against us, you bet!"

"Go on. Do your best."

"You bet we will! Tumble your logs in now, boss. We've got five miles the start of old Wolfstein anyhow, and our logs are bound to be the first at the falls."

Twenty-three remained after Dan Cribbs took away his party, and these worked with a will. For the next hour it was one continual splash.

"It makes a fellow feel as though he was never going to see them again the way they go," remarked Dick, as he tumbled a big pine trunk over the bank. "I cut that tree myself—I'm sure of it, and it's the last one I'm going to float."

"How's that, Dick?"

"Can't stand it any longer, Andy. Let the boys finish here; you and I will get on our horses and ride down to the falls and see how old Dan is making out."

Andy wanted nothing better, so Dick explained his intention to the foreman, and off they went. It was only three miles to the falls, and the distance was soon covered. They found Dan Cribbs and his party stationed on the bank watching a gang of some fifteen men on the opposite shore.

"Boss, I'm glad you've come," he said. "There they be; they ain't done us no mischief yet, but they're out for it, and I shouldn't be surprised to see the boom come across any minute."

Dick peered across the river nervously. Even if he had attempted to address Wolfstein's men it is doubtful if they would have heard him, owing to the roar of the falls.

"I don't see that we can do anything unless they make a move," he said.

"That's what I say," replied Dan, "but we might——"

"Look—look!" cried Andy, suddenly. "There go three of them now."

"By time, he's right!" said Dan. "They are sneaking up to where the boom is tied."

Dick ran along the bank, followed by all hands. The men on the opposite shore sauntered along carelessly.

Dick halted opposite to the big tree to which the end of the boom was secured. The men came up to the tree and stopped.

"Shall I holler to them, Dan?" asked Dick.

"Order them back this way," said Dan, tapping his rifle.

"All right! But don't shoot to kill."

"Just as you say. Ready, boys! Thunder, it's too late."

Suddenly one of the men raised his hand and struck at the rope which secured the end of the boom with a hatchet.

The rope was instantly severed, and the boom swung out across the channel.

"You shall pay for that, you varmint!" roared Dan Cribbs. "I told you how it would be, boss!"

Up went the rifles, and a dozen shots went flying across the stream. The two men ducked and ran. But their companions

were ready for the fight. They were armed as well as Dick's men, and they commenced blazing away.

"Fire, boys! Drive 'em back!" roared Dan. "Don't let the boom lodge, boss! I'll shove her off, and we may save some of our logs, anyhow! Now they run! The cowards! I knew they could not stand up against us! Here goes!"

Flinging down his rifle, he rushed down the bank to carry out his own order.

He gained the water's edge, and was about to plunge boldly in to turn the end of the boom, when the whole party was startled by a wild, demoniacal cry.

"Goodness gracious! What's that?" cried old Dan, bounding back up the bank.

A strange figure had suddenly risen up from among the bushes at the water's edge.

Again the cry rang out across the river—a wild, unearthly shriek.

"It's Satan himself, I'm thinking!" gasped Dan. "Look, boss—look! Was there ever such a thing seen on earth?"

CHAPTER XIX.

DICK'S MAD VENTURE.

"Great Scott!" cried Andy. "It's the wild man again."

Yes—sure enough, there he was standing on the shore at their feet.

The same strange figure, all clothed in skins, that they had seen on the night of the storm.

He waved his arms in a frantic manner above his head, howling at the same time like some maddened animal.

"Shoot him! It's the devil!" cried Dan Cribbs, raising his rifle.

"Hold on!" said Dick, catching the old man's arm. "It's only some poor lunatic. Don't do murder, Dan."

On the opposite shore Wolfstein's men, who had now retreated to a safe distance, stood looking curiously across the river at the wild man, who began running up and down the shore.

All at once he turned, and shaking his fist at Dick's men, made one leap into the water and disappeared.

Anxiously they watched to see him reappear, but he did not. There was but one conclusion to draw.

The wild man had been drowned, and his body swept over the falls under water.

While this was going on the fate of the logs seemed to have been settled.

The big boom had wedged itself against the bank, and although Dan Cribbs and the others went right to work to try and loosen it, they did not succeed.

Meanwhile the logs came rushing down the river and were rapidly piling against the boom. In a few moments more there would be a jam, and the logs which followed would be surely swept into the Malawasha.

Poor Dick was in despair.

Across the river Wolfstein's men were shouting out jeering remarks, but owing to the distance, the roar of the falls, and the crashing of the logs the words could not be heard.

"What's to be done, Dan?" demanded Dick, dolefully, when Dan at last announced that it would be impossible to dislodge the boom.

"Don't know, boss. We are jammed—that's all there is to it."

"And Wolfstein's cut will be hopelessly mixed with ours, I suppose?" said Andy.

"Oh, no; not that. The jam can't hold its own below the place where the channel of the Malawasha sets off. In fact it's about as big as it will be now. You see our logs are going down the other channel already, and I don't see any earthly

way to help it. I'm not going to risk my life going out on them, and I don't think there's a man here what feels any different from what I do."

"There's one," said Dick.

"Who?"

"I'm the man!"

"Boss, you mustn't—you shan't! We'll hold you back!"

"No, you won't! The man who tries to interfere with me is my enemy for life. I'm going out to cut that boom away and let the logs go over the falls."

"You'll go with 'em then. You'll lose your life as sure as fate."

"Dick, you shan't go!" cried Andy.

"Look!" said Dan. "There's the fellow who has put up this job. It's that little runt of a Darlington who used to work for your uncle! See him over there?"

Day had just dawned and they could now see the faces of the men on the opposite shore plainly. Mr. Darley Darlington had just appeared among them.

He took off his hat and waved it tauntingly at Dick.

Then Wolfstein's men all broke out with a wild cheer, and plunging into the woods, disappeared.

"They've done it!" cried Dan Cribbs. "No use talking, they've got the best of us. All we can do is to go back and get some of our rendrock cartridges, and blow up this jam."

"It won't do," said Dick, emphatically. "By the time that can be done, Wolfstein's logs will be down, and we will have lost the best part of ours. Dan, give me that ax!"

"Dick, you must not go! You shall not!" cried Andy, throwing himself in front of the brave boy.

But Dick pushed him aside, seized the ax from Dan Cribbs's hand, and rushed down the bank.

The lumbermen watched him breathlessly, for all knew that he was taking a fearful risk.

Andy would have followed, when he found that he could not stop Dick, but the men caught him and held him back.

"No, no! One's enough!" they cried. "If the little boss is determined he must be let to have his way, but there shan't be two if we can prevent."

Dick stepped upon the slippery boom unhesitatingly, carrying his ax in front of him so as to balance himself better.

It was a truly desperate undertaking.

The men held their breath as he walked out on the boom, step by step, now swaying this way, now that, until he reached the jam.

Here was the worst danger.

The logs were working terribly, for the current was very strong.

Now one would suddenly rise as though pushed by some invisible hand from below, and forcing its way over the boom, go tumbling down the falls, which had but a slight descent—not over six feet.

Again they would suddenly shift, leaving open spaces between, but only to come together again with terrific force.

But all these dangers seemed to possess no terror for the brave boy.

Bracing himself the best he could, he began chopping away at the boom.

If he could cut it through, the pressure of the logs would do the rest.

And that he would succeed in doing this soon seemed certain.

But the danger would come when the boom parted.

What was to become of Dick then

Andy grew faint and sick as he thought of it

But Dick had his plan.

"I'll cut it almost through and then dive outside the boom."

he determined. "It can't all go at once, and if I can get two minutes' start I'm safe, for nothing can come against me but the boom."

It was wild reasoning—the old lumbermen knew better, and so did Dick himself in the bottom of his heart.

Breathlessly they watched him, and as every man among them fully anticipated, the end came unexpectedly.

All at once a loud, cracking sound was heard, and the boom parted.

"Dick! Jump! Save yourself!" yelled Andy.

They saw him make the attempt, but the jam was too much for him.

The logs seemed to rise up in one mighty mass.

They caught the boy's right foot and pulled him back.

Andy saw him fall, and turned his head away with horror. Then the jam started.

With one mighty roar the logs went sweeping down the river, and in a moment were tumbling over the falls.

CHAPTER XX.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

A cry of horror went up from the men on the shore.

"It's all up with the little boss!" groaned Dan Cribbs. "We hadn't ought to have let him go."

"Follow him! Follow him!" shouted Andy. "He may be alive yet."

But poor Andy did not know what the rest knew.

To rescue Dick was impossible.

A hundred yards below the falls the Oklawaha ran in between two high limestone cliffs which extended for more than three miles.

There was absolutely no way of reaching the river there, for the sides of the cliffs were perpendicular, and as the descent of the bed of the river was abrupt, the force of the current was tremendous.

Before they could hope to reach the nearest point where they could get down to the water's edge, the logs which had gone over with Dick would be miles away.

"Hopeless! Hopeless!"

This was Dan Cribbs' answer to Andy's wild appeal.

But all this time Dick was not only alive but comparatively comfortable, strange as it may seem.

It was the very force of the rush and the narrowness of the channel that did it.

For a number of the logs in the center of the jam having no chance to separate, held together, forming a sort of raft, unstable it is true, and liable to go to pieces at any moment, but it kept Dick out of the water, and saved his life.

During the descent of the falls Dick just lay on his back, holding on desperately.

The water splashed all over him, got into his mouth, and nearly strangled him, drenched him from head to foot, but once they were in the narrow channel between the cliffs the boy was able to regain his feet.

On he flew, passing in between the towering cliffs, which just now were his safety, wondering what was to become of him, when he came to the point where the stream widened out below.

It was just at this moment that Dick was startled by a loud cry behind him.

Looking back, he saw a strange figure crawling on its hands and knees over the shifting logs.

"Goodness! The wild man!" thought Dick. "Where in the world did he come from?"

"Help, help! Save me!" shouted the man, striving to gain his feet.

But he fell back helplessly, trying it again and again with the same result.

And all the time he kept calling piteously, and extending his hands toward Dick.

"By gracious, I must try to do something for him!" cried Dick, and heedless of his own danger, he ran over the logs until he reached the place where the poor wretch lay struggling.

The face which was turned toward him was a horrible one, the eyes were deepset and glaring, the beard thick and matted, the cheeks sunken and deathly pale.

"Keep still," said Dick. "Don't struggle—it only makes matters worse. Are you hurt?"

"It's my leg!" groaned the man. "It's all bruised, and hurts me terribly, but I don't think it is broken. Who are you? How came I here?"

"You jumped in the water—don't you remember?"

"I jumped in the water! When—where? What does it all mean? The last I remember I was battling for life in Lake Superior—there was a storm—I was washed overboard from the deck of my schooner, the J. T. Pearson—was that yesterday, or was it long ago? My head hurts me. I—I think I'm going mad!"

Going mad! Mad he must have been for months, for when Dick asked him his name he said that it was Bunce—Captain Bunce, of the schooner J. T. Pearson.

Dick's eyes opened wide at the announcement. He could scarcely believe it, and yet the man spoke rationally enough now.

Dick questioned him closely.

For a moment his answers were sensible, then all at once he began to howl again, and springing to his feet struck at Dick furiously.

"You did this! You did this!" he yelled. "You brought me here!"

Dick sprang back, and the wild man made a rush for him.

What the result might have been if the unexpected had not happened it is hard to say.

All at once the logs ran out from between the cliffs and spread themselves over the widening stream.

The next thing Dick knew he was in the water, battling for life.

He saw the madman, still clinging to his log, sweep past him down the river.

Dick's danger was now doubled.

To remain in the water with the logs crashing against each other all around him meant a broken leg or worse.

Clutching at the nearest, he managed to climb upon it, and lying out at full length, held on desperately.

On he flew faster and faster it seemed to him until all at once the log struck hard against something, and he rolled off into the water.

To his intense relief he found himself standing on the bottom, with the bank but a few feet away.

He staggered toward it, crawled out, and sank down upon the snow.

Then everything seemed to grow dark around him.

On rushed the logs toward the mill at Black Bay.

The winter cut was saved.

Nothing could check their progress now.

But Dick lay as one dead.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE WILD MAN'S WARNING.

When Dick came to himself he was lying on a mattress before a fire of blazing logs.

A man sat on the other side of the fire cleaning a rifle; near

him was a big dog stretched out at full length asleep with its nose between his forepaws.

The man was humming a tune as he worked, and the whole scene was as quiet and peaceful as anyone could wish.

"Hello, young fellow, are you awake? Thought that sleep would fix you," exclaimed the man. "By gracious, you had a close call; a few moments more and I believe you'd have been booked for pneumonia, you were so blamed cold."

Dick sat up and stared.

"I'd like to know where I am, and what all this means?" he gasped. "Last I remember, I——"

"Now hold on, never mind what you remember," broke in the man in a kindly tone. "Just you drink this cup of hot tea what I've been saving for you, and lie down again and cover yourself up. I'll tell it, and then you'll get it straight."

Dick realized that he could do nothing better than to obey.

So after he drank the tea he lay down again, and the owner of the hut, who announced himself as Mose Stanton, "a hunter, sir, what has lived in the North Woods going on twenty year," told his story in his own, rough way, and Dick knew that he had been found in an unconscious condition where he had fallen on the shore.

While they were still talking, a crowd of mounted men came riding up to the hut.

"Hey! Hello, in there!" was shouted. "We are looking for Boss Wright, of No. 38. He got caught on the logs and went over the falls. Seen any body washed down past here?"

"Waal, no," answered the hunter, who had stepped to the door. "I haven't seen no dead body, if that's what you mean. Come in, gentlemen, and warm up. Mebbe——"

But Dick could not stand it any longer.

He had seen them through the window, and now he stepped out into full view, for it was Andy and the gang.

"Dick! Oh, Dick!" cried Andy springing from the saddle.

"By thunder, it's the little boss himself! Hooray!" yelled Dan Cribbs.

And then the lumbermen threw up their hats and almost went wild with joy.

There was no more trouble now for Dick, but Mr. Lazarus Wolfstein had made a lot of trouble for himself.

Before his men, under the direction of Mr. Darley Darlington, could repair the boom, a good bit of Wolfstein's cut went down the Oklawaha.

It made some trouble for Dick, too, for when they began to saw in the big mill at Black Bay, as they did two weeks later, these logs all had to be towed to a special place.

It was June before the Jew sent men to claim them.

Dick presented a bill for storage, and held on to the logs for security.

Then Wolfstein sued him, and Squire Pine got a case, and matters were lively all around.

Early in the spring Mr. Goldwin and Ella came up to the Bay, and went all over the mill, Mr. Goldwin being carried in his chair, for the old lumberman never allowed his infirmity to make any difference in his movements.

"Go on as you are, Dick," he said, when they parted. "Success is sure if you stick to it with the same energy with which you have begun. But don't you start your raft till I wire you, whatever you do."

Dick got the telegram on the tenth of June.

Three days later his second raft was in Duluth.

Dick and Andy were taken on to the floor of the Exchange, and held quite a reception after the raft was sold.

For once more Dick hit it right.

Although there was no boom this time, the market was well up and, the lumber being prime, brought high prices.

In fact, the sale was so successful that the papers all over

the West noticed it, and they all spoke of Dick as the Boy Lumber King, a name which was destined to stick to him for many a long day.

All this time nothing was heard of the wild man.

Squire Pine notified the relatives of Captain Bunce, and a search party was sent up the river to look for the unfortunate man, but they could find no trace of him.

Dick was now in a decidedly flourishing condition.

Every obligation had been promptly met, and the men, having received their pay regularly for the first time in several years, were willing to do anything for the "little boss."

Late in August when the sawing for the fall raft was in full progress, Dick began to run the mill until eleven o'clock at night, seldom getting away himself before one, for he and Andy had figuring to do in the office, which could not well be begun until the mill shut down.

One night when they were working together thus, a sudden cry was heard outside.

"What in the name of sense was that?" exclaimed Andy.

Dick seized the lantern and ran out into the mill.

He flashed the light around, but could see nothing.

Then the cry came again from the foot of the run.

The boys rushed to the open doors, catching sight of a dark figure standing on the logs.

"Goodness! The wild man!" Andy gasped.

It was no one else.

There he stood, wrapped in his coat of skins, just as Dick had seen him last.

"Come away! Come away!" he shouted. "They are going to kill you! They are going to burn the mill!"

Then before the boys could make a move to get to him, he went bounding over the logs until he gained the water's edge, when he jumped in and disappeared.

"What in the world does this mean?" gasped Andy.

Dick was deathly pale.

"It's a warning," he whispered. "Andy, there is something in it. We must catch that man. He's heard something. Wolfstein is at his old tricks again."

"Catch him by all means, if we can," cried Andy.

"Come on!" said Dick, and he ran down the steps and out upon the logs.

When they reached the place where the wild man disappeared, they suddenly caught sight of him scrambling up the bank on the other side.

He saw them and, turning, waved his hands, pointing back toward the mill.

Then, having gained the top of the bank, he plunged into the bushes and disappeared.

"We can do nothing now," said Dick. "Let's get back, Andy, we don't leave the mill to-night."

"Not if we know it, Dick, but—look!"

Dick gave a startled cry.

They had turned now and were looking back toward the mill.

A single tongue of flame was shooting skyward just above the kiln room.

"Oh, Andy, they've done it!" groaned Dick. "The mill is doomed!"

CHAPTER XXII.

DICK IN THE TOILS.

"Don't give up heart, Dick!" cried Andy. "We may save the mill yet. Run! Run!"

As the boys ran through the mill neither for an instant doubted that the fire was the work of an incendiary.

How could they think otherwise, after the wild man's warning, and the other evidences of Lazarus Wolfstein's treachery already had?

Dick saw that it would be simply impossible to save the north end of the mill, but still hoped for the end toward the river, where the big band saws were located.

He hastily slammed the door, and fell back against Andy.

"Blow the whistle!" he cried. "Quick! I'll go for the fire plugs! We may do something yet!"

So Andy ran one way, and Dick another. In a moment Andy had thrown open the valve which controlled the whistle, and it broke out with its shrill shriek that was destined to rouse all Black Bay out of their beds, and bring them to the scene.

This done, Andy bounded into the office, threw open the safe, and hastily secured certain important papers relating to the business.

Then, closing the safe on the books, Andy ran back into the mill, fully expecting to hear the fire-plugs working, and to see the water rushing over the floor.

Nothing of the sort!

The mill was deserted.

The interior of the mill was filled with dense, suffocating smoke through which Andy groped his way, shouting Dick's name aloud. There was no answer at first, then all at once a hoarse voice shouted:

"Here, Andy, here!"

Andy made a rush for the side door which opened on the canal where the engine which controlled the fire-plugs was, and where he and Dick kept their boat.

He had almost reached the door when a man suddenly sprang out of the gloom and made a rush for him.

"Now I've got you, you young snoozer!" he cried. "Come on! your friend is waiting for you here!"

Even in the uncertain light Andy recognized the fellow.

It was Abe, the tough lumberman, who had captured him in the hut up in the North Woods.

A second more and the man would have had him by the throat. But Andy was as quick as lightning in all his movements. He jumped nimbly aside, hauled off and dealt Abe a stunning blow in the face, which sent him reeling back through the open door.

"Come on! Come on!" shouted a voice outside. "Let him go! We've got enough to do here."

Then there was a scrambling on the steps. Andy rushed out of the door and saw Dick lying in the bottom of his own boat.

The man Silas was with him—Abe was just jumping in.

Before Andy could make another move or utter a sound, Silas flung up a revolver and fired twice.

Andy ducked down and saved his life, no doubt, but the time lost put Dick beyond his reach.

For the two men, seizing the oars, sent the boat spinning down the canal.

Something had to be done, and Andy, half mad with excitement and fear for Dick, rushed back into the mill.

By this time it was light enough.

The flames had eaten their way through the roof and siding nearest the road.

With one glance at the seething furnace thus exposed, Andy rushed into the office to meet a big crowd of Black Bay men who had hurried to the scene.

Charley Steers was in the lead, and half the mill men followed close behind.

"Oh, Charley, they've carried off Dick, and set the mill afire!" groaned Andy, falling into the arms of his friend.

These hurried words were heard by all.

"This is Wolfstein's work!" cried Charley. "Andy, we must act quick."

"We must—we must!"

"We'll take the Snowbird and follow. I think I know where they have gone. There was a steam yacht seen off the Heads just before the fog blew in. It's Wolfstein's, I'll bet. Come!

Don't let's lose a moment. Follow me, fellows! Who'll go to the rescue of the Little Boss?"

Who would go? Who wouldn't?

Selecting six of the bravest young fellows among the mill men, Charley and Andy hurried down to the bay and boarded the little pleasure steamer, Snowbird.

Ten minutes did the business of starting. Within twenty from the time of Dick's capture the Snowbird was under way.

There had been no time to go for the pilot, so Andy himself took the wheel.

"Can you make it, old man?" asked Charley, who stood in the pilot-house beside his friend.

"Charley, we must make it. The only thing is the fear that after all it may not be Wolfstein's yacht."

Andy sounded the whistle twice.

The sound had scarcely died away when a wild yell rang out through the fog.

"It's the wild man's cry, by thunder!" exclaimed Andy. "I'd know it anywhere this side of Jericho, and— Look—look! There he is!"

Andy had just time to turn aside.

Suddenly a light shot up ahead, showing them a small boat right before them.

There was a lantern set in the bow, and standing up amidships was the wild man, waving his arms madly.

"Take me aboard!" he shouted. "I'll show you which way they went. I know—I know."

* * * * *

"Throw us a line, Bill. That's the talk! Now, then, take his feet; we'll manage t'other end. By gum, we've got 'em! The boss ought to be pleased with this."

It was Dick Wright who was lifted up out of the boat and dropped upon the deck of the handsome steam yacht, which lay anchored off the Heads in the fog.

Gagged and bound, Dick was perfectly helpless.

As they dropped him upon the deck, a young man, muffled up to the eyes, came hurrying forward with a lantern.

"So you've got him, boys, have you?" he asked.

In spite of his disguise Dick knew him—knew the voice—it was Mr. Darley Darlington—there could be no mistake about that.

"Yes, we've got him," growled Silas, "and we've done the rest, too. Don't you see?"

"Where's the other one?" demanded Darlington, looking down into the boat.

"Didn't get him," replied Silas.

"Didn't get him? What in thunder——"

"Now, don't you go to growling, boss. We did the best we could, and let me just say, right here the sooner we scuttle this here craft and let her drop to the bottom of the lake the better, for this fellow has friends in Black Bay, and we'll be followed as sure as a gun."

"Right," said Darlington. "Run up the green light and call the Prince; as for this fellow, you may as well leave him where he is."

It was just at that moment that a hoarse whistle, instantly followed by a strange, unearthly cry, rang out through the fog.

"For Heaven sake what is that?" gasped Darley Darlington, hurrying forward with his lantern.

Dick knew. No one who had once heard it could possibly mistake the cry of the wild man for anything else than what it was.

CHAPTER XXIII.

CONCLUSION.

Mr. Darley Darlington leaned over the yacht's rail, peering off into the fog.

What he saw was a light moving past and the dark outline

of a small steamer, its true character being made known by the grinding of the screw.

"She's gone!" he said, at last. "If they are after us they've missed us in the fog; now, then, Dick Wright, I'm off."

He hurried away and Dick could hear him following the others into the boat. A moment later and he heard them pull off, and they were gone.

Oh, how he struggled then to free himself—struggled as he had never done before.

He could feel that the yacht was sinking lower and lower in the water.

He felt that if this much was true then in all probability the rest was true also. Still he struggled, pulling and tugging at the cord which held his wrists together—struggled until he broke it, and threw up his freed hands with a glad cry.

The rest was but the work of a moment. Of course Dick had a knife; of course he lost no time in using it; of course he bounded down into the cabin the instant he was free.

There sat old Mr. Goldwin, gagged and tied to his chair.

"Dick! Great heavens, save Ella!" he gasped, as Dick set him free. "She's in there—oh, those wretches! I know all! We are sinking! Ella—Ella! Dick! Never mind me!"

He pointed toward one of the four staterooms which opened off the elegantly furnished cabin.

As Dick rushed to the door, he heard the grinding of the steamer's screw again.

He threw open the stateroom door and rushed in.

Ella lay in the berth tied up as her father had been.

"Dick—I knew you'd come!" she cried, as the brave boy pulled the handkerchief from her mouth and cut the cords which held her down.

"Up, Ella! Up!" cried Dick. "Up! The yacht has been scuttled and is sinking! Those scoundrels may be returning—we must fight for our lives—Ella, I depend upon you!"

Dick rushed to the door with sinking heart, for many footsteps could be heard on deck—they were coming down the stairs. He flung himself against the door and tried to hold it.

No use! It was pushed open, forcing him back.

Pushed open to admit Andy Benson, Charley Steers, and the mill men.

"Thank goodness we are saved!"

* * * * *

It was Ella Goldwin who uttered the last exclamation, and she never spoke a truer word.

Saved they certainly were, for the Snowbird lay alongside the sinking yacht, and in less time than it takes to tell it, Mr. Goldwin and Ella were transferred to her deck.

A strange, uncouth figure stood there, ready to greet them. It was the wild man.

He bowed politely, for a sane fit was on him.

"This is Captain Bunce," said Andy. "It was he who guided us—you owe your lives to him."

"The yacht! It's sinking—can nothing be done to save her?" exclaimed the wild man. "Mr. Goldwin, is it yours?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the old lumberman. "My new yacht, the Norma. Save her if you can, and I'll pay you well."

They could and they did. Under Captain Bunce's directions pegs were hastily cut and the holes plugged; two of the men went to work on the pumps and soon had the Norma safe.

The Snowbird steamed into Black Bay. Here a big crowd was gathered to meet them.

Mr. Goldwin and Ella were taken in a carriage to the hotel.

Once in their comfortable room at the Belden House, Mr. Goldwin told how the crew of the yacht had suddenly turned upon him—how, after they had been made captive, Darlington came on board and informed him that he was there for no other purpose than to carry out the plot which had been ineffectually tried up in the North Woods, and to burn Dick's mill.

Details are not necessary, and we shall not go into them.

"It is Wolfstein's work," declared Mr. Goldwin. "Although he is a British subject, I think I can reach him. If there is law and justice in Canada, and I think there is, he shall pay for this. Never mind about the mill, Dick. You shall have a new one. They shall not down you if I spend the last dollar I am worth."

So said Mr. Goldwin, and the old lumberman was as good as his word.

Black Bay Mill was not entirely destroyed, and the lumber in the basin was not hurt a bit.

Before snow fell the mill was as good as ever, and Dick ran his fall raft down to Duluth and sold out with his usual success.

Andy did not go that trip, but stayed behind to look after the mill. He was the first to greet Dick when he stepped off the City of Pearl River, and consequently was first to hear the news.

"They've caught Darlington," said Dick, in answer to his eager query. "He's confessed everything, and the Canadian authorities have old Wolfstein in jail."

"Hooray!" shouted Andy, flinging up his hat.

"That ain't all. Abe and Silas were captured in St. Paul with Darlington. Mr. Goldwin's detectives have been shadowing them for weeks. They'll get their deserts now, and don't you make any mistake."

And so they did. Darlington, Abe and Silas went to Stillwater penitentiary, but Wolfstein blew his brains out in the Port Arthur jail while awaiting trial.

A word about the wild man and a few other matters, and we have done.

Dick took the unfortunate captain into his especial charge; a good doctor was called to treat his case, and discovered that he was suffering from a slight fracture of the skull, improperly healed, which affected his mind.

After an operation Captain Bunce permanently recovered his reason. He could then remember nothing of his wanderings in the North Woods. In fact, his memory seemed to end with the storm on the lake when he was washed overboard from the Pearson.

As soon as he was well Squire Pine returned the ten thousand dollars which Dick had found on the schooner.

With this Captain Bunce fitted out a smaller craft, and is carrying kiln-dried lumber for Dick.

Of course Dick flourished. How could it be otherwise?

The Boy Lumber King is now known all over the Northwest.

Mr. Goldwin has passed on to another sphere, and Dick has his uncle's immense interests in charge as well as his own.

Not because he married Ella, for he didn't. Andy did that a year after her father's death. But because Ella placed her business interests in the hands of the great lumber firm of Wright & Benson. We knew them as The Boys of Black Bay.

THE END.

Read "THE BOY NIHILIST; or, YOUNG AMERICA IN RUSSIA," by Allan Arnold, which will be the next number (576) of "Pluck and Luck."

SPECIAL NOTICE: All back numbers of this weekly except the following are in print: 1 to 5, 7, 8, 10 to 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29 to 31, 34 to 36, 38 to 40, 42, 43, 48 to 50, 54, 55, 57, 58, 60, 62, 64, 66, 68, 69, 75, 81, 84 to 86, 89, 92 to 94, 100, 107, 109, 110, 116, 119, 124 to 126, 162, 163, 166, 171, 179 to 181, 212, 265. If you cannot obtain the ones you want from any newsdealer, send the price in money or postage stamps by mail to FRANK TOUSEY, PUBLISHER, 24 UNION SQUARE, New York, and you will receive the copies you order, by return mail.

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THINGS OF INTEREST.

The old saying, "As savage as a rat," must be changed. A Chicago boy caught a large rat and kept him in a cage for a month and tried many experiments on him. One of the things he did was to let loose a large grasshopper in the same cage, and the rat was so frightened by the insect that he crouched in a corner and whined and shivered with fear. When a sparrow was introduced to the cage, the rat ran around and around until he fell down from exhaustion. When naturalists tell us of the fierceness of the rat after this, they should leave out the Chicago rodent.

At Essen, Germany, where Krupp, the cannon maker, has his great works, there is a city ordinance that reads: "Any boy who shall be bitten by a dog shall be arrested and fined at least two marks by the magistrate. If bitten twice by the same dog he shall be sent to the city prison for not less than three days." The idea is to give the dog a chance, and it is perhaps the only city in the world where a stray dog is not afraid of a stray boy. All the dog has to do is to bite him, and away goes the boy.

Not one girl in a hundred can use a pocket-knife to sharpen a lead pencil without cutting her fingers, and as for whittling at a broomstick, they'd cut their heads off if they tried it. Miss Ella Blackburn, of Iron Mountain, Mo., is a different kind of girl, however. She is only thirteen years old, and yet she has whittled out and put together the wheels of a clock that keeps fairly good time, as well as a wooden chain 27 feet long, and a full set of croquet balls. As a matter of fact, she is a better whistler than any boy in town, and she also whistles as she whittles.

"The success which has followed the introduction of reindeer in Alaska has aroused attention in Canada, and the suggestion has been made that the reindeer will settle one of the problems of developing the resources of the Canadian north-land," said Albert F. Steele, of Ottawa, Canada. "One has to hoof it or use dogs up in the Arctic stretches now, and it is conceded that civilization will move slowly if no better means of transportation is found. The United States imported reindeer into Alaska and taught them that they could live just as happily and usefully in Alaska as in their homeland. Some 25,000 are now in Alaska and they are more than earning their keep. Canada need not go to the trouble of importing reindeer. She has herds of reindeer all ready up in the northern

regions. All that is needed is to train them, for they are very wild. These Canadian reindeer are really caribou, but Canadians say they will do as well. The caribou are plentiful throughout the Canadian north. Of course, our people will have to catch these animals, and train them, but to a people who are building an empire that is a trifling matter." The most active advocate of using reindeer or caribou in the development of Northern Canada is Fred S. Lawrence, who lives at Fort Vermilion, on the lower Peace River. He has made his home in the north for twenty-five years. He suggests that a start might be made toward domesticating Canadian reindeer by inducing Laplanders to emigrate to Canada. The Laplanders, by reason of their pastures becoming crowded, owing to the great number of their reindeer, are looking for some part of the world to which they can transport their herds and families and establish themselves anew. The reindeer is fleet and can be more easily kept than the horse. A prospector could maintain himself for a year with ten head of reindeer. If his provisions gave out he could eat the reindeer.

OUR COMIC COLUMN.

A young man married against the wishes of his parents, and, in telling a friend how to break the news to them, said: "Tell them that I am dead, and gently work up to the climax."

"I suppose you have read Shakespeare's works?" said the young man from the east. "Yes, all of them," replied Miss Fitz, of St. Louis, "that is, unless he has written something in the past year."

Grandfather—Hey! Stop a minute, boy, I want 'ee. Tommy—Can't, 'cos mother's waiting to give me a thrashing. Grandfather—Bless me! Fancy a boy running for it! Tommy—Well, if I don't, father'll get home before it's over.

First Park Donkey—"Here comes another fat woman. Second Park Donkey—"Yes, I wonder why it is all the delicate, ethereal, lightweight girls pass us by, and all the fat women want to ride us?"

One day the office boy went to the editor of "The Soaring Eagle" and said: "There's a tramp at the door, and he says he has had nothing to eat for six days." "Fetch him in," said the editor. "If we can find how he does it we can run this paper for another week."

Anxious Mother—"My dear, it's perfectly abominable the way the men hug you at these hotel hops. Now look at that couple coming this way. See how respectfully that gentleman treats the lady he is dancing with. He holds her almost at arm's length." Pretty Daughter—"But, ma, they are married."

An Irishman, more patriotic than clever, enlisted in a dragoon regiment with the intention of becoming a gallant soldier. The fencing instructor had experienced rather a difficult job in the matter of explaining to him the various ways of using the sword. "Now," he said, "how would you use the sword if your opponent fainted?" "Bedad," said Pat, with gleaming eyes, "I'd just tickle him with the point to see if he was shamming."

THE ROBBER OF DEVIL'S POOL

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

Imagine a great mass of brown curls, tucked into a net—a pair of roguish brown eyes—one dainty slipper, and one torn shoe—a dress tucked up jauntily over a gay balmoral, and an exquisitely dimpled arm and hand flourishing a gay feather duster among brocatelle sofas and chairs.

Imagine all this, and you will have a portrait of Gipsy.

The morning sun crept stealthily in at the window and played joyously upon the velvet carpet, while a tall, light-haired exquisite, in a duck suit and panama, crept with equal stealth in at the door, and stood complacently viewing the scene through his eyeglass.

"'Pon honor, Gipsy, you are as sweet as a May morning in that rig. Ha—ha! I'm glad I've caught you."

"Caught me, indeed!" and the duster handle came down with a thump on the floor. "Do you suppose I care how you catch me? Come, no nonsense, you immaculate piece of perfection. You are nonpareil. 'Tis enough for both. Just step over that pile of dust—'Come o'er the sea, Charley, sweet Charley, dear Charley,' " she sang, gaily, "and I've something to tell you when you get safely on this side of the dirt pile. There, your clothes are safe once more, and you are happy. Not an atom of dust on your distracting tie. Now to business. I want you to go down to Devil's Pool with me this afternoon, and help to gather some of the lovely red berries that grow there, to put in Effie's hair, for the party to-night."

"Can't go, 'pon my word. Impossible."

"Ah, you don't want to go. Then I'll break my engagement. Won't have anything to do with you. It's hard enough to undertake to remodel such a dandy under any circumstances, and to make you into something practical and useful, without any opposition on your part."

And, so saying, the brown witch on the sofa beside him, flashed a half-comical, half-fierce glance into the cerulean eyes above her.

"You'll hurt yourself, Gip, if you go on at this rate. It's bad enough for the health to get into a rage. Listen to reason. I've got to go to Piermont to-night at six o'clock, without fail, to meet a gentleman on important business; otherwise, nothing would prevent me from going. My little girl knows it. Give me a kiss, and make up."

"Won't give you a kiss, no time, never, you complacent——"

"But you shall, you monkey, you elf, you——" and the sentence was finished in a peal of laughter and a love skirmish.

"I'll be revenged," cried the rosy-lipped creature of sweet sixteen, as she sank breathless and nettled in the corner of the sofa, her tumbled curls flying and her eyes twinkling behind her lover's glasses, which he had perched on the conquered beauty's nose. "I'll go alone to Devil's Pool. I'll take my pistol, and ride Meg; and if I meet Daredevil, so much the better—I'll have seen him, then. I'll have a nice little talk with him—perhaps he'll cut you out, no telling—and if he sees me home, I'll ask him to call again. Glorious prospect! to have a robber-chieftain lover. My dear, little, golden-haired, patent-leathered adorer isn't jealous, I hope," noticing a rising flush in his cheeks.

"Not a jealous, Gip. Go and make his acquaintance, and if you like him better than me—well, if you wilfully endanger your life, by going alone to Devil's Pool, don't blame me when you find yourself dead, that's all," and flinging her hand from him, he sprang through the low French window, and was gone before she could collect her senses sufficiently to call after him.

* * * * *

"Good-by to you, Miss Gipsy, honey; have a care to de high-

sperrited hoss, and keep de tight rein on her. I brin' to my recommend de time dat she ran wid de old commodo'e, and frew him. So have de care, baby."

"Never fear for me, Uncle Joe; I have a constitution like the United States, and can manage Meg or any other animal of her size."

The nut-brown maiden threw one radiant glance back to the faithful old servant, who held open the carriage gate, and touching up her spirited animal, disappeared around the bend in the wooded road.

It was late in the afternoon of the same day on which the above scene took place—a faultless summer day—just clouds enough to cover the distant hills with great purple shadows, that continually chased each other over the tops and down the sides, clearing for an instant to bathe the woods in a flood of yellow sunshine, that trickled through the elms and lindens, the pines and the maples, fresh flushed with the thought of fall, and lay its golden fingers in the moss beneath, when over the sun the idle clouds would lazily float again, and shroud the landscape in a mellow gloom.

"Oh, Meg!" exclaimed the little rider, as she drew rein to watch the changing hues of the woods across the river, "can't we have an adventure?"

Meg pricked up her ears, but whether at the idea or at the sound of a frog at the roadside, that gave an explosive grunt as though awakening from a bad dream and turning suddenly in its miry bed, cannot be definitely determined.

"Gus is angry, that's certain," mused Gipsy. "He's jealous. Terrible thing to have a jealous husband. I must cure him. Bah! jealous of Daredevil, a notorious robber and highwayman. This is really rich. Too rich to keep on such a warm day. Yes; I will go to Devil's Pool. I have my pistol, and—pshaw! there's no danger of meeting anyone there. Get up, Meg; on with you! I must show Gus my berries in the morning."

An hour's ride brought Gipsy to a path in the forest, across which the afternoon sun threw long bars of golden light. Following this familiar trail, which grew darker and narrower as she cautiously advanced, and often obliged her to bow her head to the level with her horse to escape the dense foliage, she at last came to an opening—a charming little dell, in which lay a black, sluggish pool, edged with bushes, heavily laden with beautiful scarlet berries.

Gipsy's eyes sparkled at the sight, and she thought of her triumph on the morrow.

She glanced cautiously around ere she slid from her horse's back, and felt instinctively for her pistol.

She turned up the skirt of her habit, and loaded it with the tempting berries.

She could not satisfy herself with a few.

Then she made them into a huge bouquet, and fastened them on to Meg's back, behind the saddle.

No sound broke the stillness but the chirping of the crickets. She grew bolder.

"What a charming spot," she murmured. "How silly to take the word of ignorant negroes that Daredevil has made it his rendezvous. Probably the poor fellow is hundreds of miles away. Why, this is a natural circus ground," continued she, rapturously.

Then tucking her riding skirt up over her gay balmoral, and pushing her hat on to the extreme back of her head, she jumped on Meg's back, and stood upright, exclaiming: "Up, Meg! we must have at least one turn here, before we go."

Meg pricked up her ears and broke into a dancing, prancing hop-step.

Gipsy's cheeks flushed with fun, and a merry laugh escaped her.

She forgot her dangerous quarters.

At a word Meg broke into graceful lope, going around and around the pool in a circle, and then stood up on her hind legs.

It was her daily practice.

Gipsy stood firm, her cheeks flushed crimson and her eyes scintillating fire, when a loud laugh rang out on the still air, and a man's voice cried:

"Bravo! Lady, do that again, and I'll give you a purse of gold."

Gipsy's blood left her cheeks, and Meg came down with a bound.

There sat a black-bearded man dressed in a great cloak, on a protruding rock above her head.

"Just try it over, will you? and I show you some new tricks. Here's the purse," he continued, holding aloft a tiny scarlet bag.

Gipsy felt that her face was pallid, and she trembled in her saddle; but with a mighty effort she commanded her voice, and answered boldly:

"Keep your purse, sir. Who are you?"

"One who is accustomed to being obeyed," replied the deep voice. "Continue your performance."

"Who do you take me for—a circus rider? I am my own mistress. I never ride for money or for strangers."

"Ah, well; we can soon be acquainted, then. I'm Daredevil, and you——"

"Miss Gipsy Wood, of Cedarville," replied she, without finching.

"You're a charming girl, I see; and I'm most happy to have met you. Now, will you repeat that equestrian performance?"

"I will ride twice around the ring, sir," she replied, "and then I go. It's getting late."

"Oh! never fear the hour. I will see you safely home," and the slim figure arose, swung himself from the rock down into the glen, and breaking off a switch from a tree, stripped off the leaves, and placed himself in the center, ready to touch up Meg when she came around.

"None of that, sir. Meg goes by my voice. Throw away your whip."

"You are an imperious little beauty. I really begin to adore you. Now, allow me to show you some new tricks."

"Not a trick, sir. It's late, and I'm going."

"Not so fast, my lady. You shall wait my pleasure," cried he, springing forward, with uplifted hand, to catch Meg's bridle.

Gipsy's cheeks flushed with indignation, and she looked a modern Camilla as she stood upright on her horse.

"Touch that bridle, sir, and you shall smell gunpowder," cried she, pointing her pistol at his head.

For an instant the man looked baffled; then suddenly brightening up, he motioned to someone behind her, and cried:

"This way. Seize her horse."

Gipsy turned in affright.

It was a ruse.

No one was there; but in that instant the robber caught her in his arms, drew her pistol from her hand, and seated her, half fainting, on the turf beside him.

"Gipsy," murmured a strangely familiar voice in her ear, and a great black wig and beard rolled from the robber's head to the ground, "can you forgive me?"

Gus' golden curls and cerulean eyes, robbers' wigs and black beards, were instantly floating in confusion through Gipsy's head.

She looked up at the robber, and there sat Gus instead.

The truth flashed on her.

Bewildered and weak with fright, now that the danger was

passed, she sank pale and trembling within that horrid robber cloak, upon a familiar duck vest.

"Forgive me, Gip; I didn't mean to carry the joke so far. I grew so confounded nervous over your coming here alone that I sent my brother Dick to Piermont in my place, and followed on after you, dressed like Daredevil, to see what you would say when you saw him; and also to protect you from anyone else. When I saw you so brave I couldn't help carrying the joke too far. I'm a wretch; forgive me."

And he gazed piteously into her pale face.

"You're no such thing. There! I won't hear such stuff."

And an arm stole softly around his neck, and a pair of pale lips grew rosy as they darted beneath his moustache.

"You're my own sweet, darling little master."

A SMART BOY

"Tumble down out'n dat cheer," said Uncle Mose, addressing himself to a five-year-old boy lolling in the chair of the bootblack stand—"jes git right down out'n dat stam. You ain't got no business up dar nohow, and hyar's a cash customer, I 'specks," said the old fellow, cocking a somewhat doubtful eye upon the reporter.

"That's a fine boy, uncle; is he yours?" said the reporter, as the limber-limbed young monkey swung himself out over the side of the bootblack "stam," and dropped to the floor.

"I 'spect so; leastwise, dat's w'at de ole woman say. You, Abum Linkum," addressing himself to the boy, "w'at fur yo' sot dar on de flo' rollin' up yo' eyes dat a-way? Got up on yo' stood dar in de co'ner dis minit, an' 'have yo'self. Take dem fingers out'n yo' mouf an' quit'er pullin' dem 'dick'las faces."

"Can he read, Uncle Mose?"

"Can he read? Ya—ya! dat's good. Can dat boy read? Ya—ya! What he bin goin' to skyule fur dese free yeahs? Yo' jes ought'er heah him read. He reads to his ole fadder and mudder every night ob dar life. Doesn't yer, Abum?"

"Yes, daddy."

"Does he read the Bible to you, Uncle Mose?"

"No, h'it's not the Bible; leastwise he hasn't done read h'it to us yit. He reads us de wot-you-call-um?"

"The First Reader?"

"No, not de Fus' Reader. H'it's sufin' like de Fus' Reader, still h'it's not zackly de Fus' Reader, but after all, I 'specks she's putty much the same."

"Is it a primer, uncle?"

"Dat does soun' somefin' like it, sah. We're a-gittin' neah it—we're a-gittin' neah it, sah! 'Spec's we'll fotch her de very next clatter. Can't be fur off now. It mus' be nex' to de—what was de name ob dat las' one what yo' call off, sah?"

"Primer."

"Dat's de feller. H'it must be next doah to her. Anyhow, h'it's right 'long dar in de same row, an' not half a block away at de very fudderst. Blame me ole buttons, wat now is dis yer wat he reads to me an' his ole mammy ever' blessed night"—striking his clenched fist upon his forehead. "I jis' knock dis ole fool head off, I get so mad 'cos I can't fink ob dat wat de boy read so fine all de time. Wat is dis, Abum Linkum, wat yo' reads to yo' old parents ever' night?"

"De alphabet, daddy."

"Dat's her. Yah—yah! I know'd we'd fotch hur pooty soon. We was jis' a-grazin' ob her when we struck de primer. Dat's h'it, de alferbeck! I h'ain't soc him onto de Bible an' dem oder ones yit, but I 'specks we'll tackle 'em 'fo' long, wen we gits ready. But we ain't got no hankerin' fo' dem yit. De alferbeck's so fine an' comfo'tin' and soovin', like dat we don't like to part wid her. Bless yo', sah, we's got so used to her dat we jest nat'ly goes asleep over her ever' night—mammy an' me."

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